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# **Shoot & Capture: Media Representations of US Military Operations in Somalia 1992-93 and Fallujah 2004**

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Submitted by: Caitlin Patrick  
PhD Thesis  
Department of Geography  
October 2007



— 2 APR 2008

# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
List of Images, Figures & Tables.....	iii

## *Part One – Critical Foundations*

Introduction – Watching ‘Others’, Watching ‘Ourselves’ .....	1
Chapter One – Theorising the Media, Discourse & the Visual.....	12
i) Key Theoretical Bases for Studying Media.....	13
ii) Mediation, Power/Knowledge & Society.....	18
iii) Representing ‘Others’ .....	26
Representing the ‘developing’ world: a look at ‘Africa’ .....	31
Deconstructing self/other binaries.....	37
iv) Interpreting the Image/Photograph.....	40
v) Representing War & Death.....	49
The political economy of media production and representation.....	53
Covering Somalia: political and economic factors.....	59
Structural studies: embedding in Iraq 2003 and the current media landscape.....	63
vi) Conclusion: A Return to the Larger Picture.....	69

Chapter Two – Approaching the Case Studies: A Background to Method & Media Sources.....	72
i) The Case Studies: Why They Are Important & How They Were Selected.....	73
The case study approach.....	77
ii) Media Sources.....	81
iii) Methodological Approach & Coverage Trends.....	85
The Somalia case study.....	87
The Fallujah case study.....	95
iv) An Ethics of Approach: The Importance of Foucault & Derrida.....	97



<b>Chapter Three – Somalia: Past Policy &amp; the Political Landscape.....</b>	<b>101</b>
i) 'Traditional' Somali Society & Customs.....	103
ii) The Colonial Era.....	111
iii) The Somali State, the Cold War & Collapse.....	115
iv) The 'Failed' State: Somalia Before & During UNOSOM I.....	124
v) 'Saving' Somalia: 'The New World Order' & Decisions to Intervene.....	134
vi) Americans Arrive: Somalia During UNITAF.....	138
vii) UNOSOM II: The Road to 'Black Hawk Down' .....	147
viii) Leaving Somalia: Narrating the Aftermath.....	155

## *Part Two – The Case Studies*

<b>Chapter Four – From Beachhead to 'Black Hawk Down': Somalia &amp; 'Africa', 'Dark' Places, 'Failed' States.....</b>	<b>164</b>
i) A 'Failed' State: Placing Somalia.....	167
ii) Responsibility & the 'Failed' State.....	170
iii) 'Discovering' Famine: Death Statistics & Moral Comparisons.....	175
iv) Fatalism versus Western 'Saviours' .....	180
v) Framing Intervention: 'Saviours' Arrive or Doomed to Failure?.....	184
vi) Somalia in Context: Exceptions in Coverage.....	194
vii) Fatalism Resurgent: The Land of No Hope.....	198
viii) Somalia Doomed: Violence in Mogadishu & Echoes of Vietnam.....	201
ix) 'Black Hawk Down': The Unexpected Expected.....	206
x) Sum-up of Major Themes.....	216

<b>Chapter Five – From Beachhead to 'Black Hawk Down': Stereotypes in Somalia; Passive Victims, Aggressive Killers &amp; Their 'Saviours'.....</b>	<b>224</b>
i) Aid Workers: Primary Storytellers & Trusted Voices.....	227
ii) Passivity & Helplessness: Representation of Women & Children.....	231
iii) The Somali 'Ghetto': Somali Men as Drug-Users & Violent Delinquents.....	235
iv) <i>Khat</i> : Fuel to the Fire of Conflict?.....	244
v) From Somalia to South-central: the Persistence of Black 'Ghetto' Framing.....	247
vi) Warfare in Mogadishu: Somalis as Threat & Under Threat.....	257
vii) 'Black Hawk Down': Images of 'Savagery' & Ungratefulness.....	265
viii) Aidid: 'The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse' .....	270
ix) Sum-up of Major Themes.....	283

<b>Chapter Six – Fallujah 2004: Lessons Learned &amp; Bodies That Didn’t Matter.....</b>	<b>294</b>
i)     Analysing Fallujah: Background & Coverage Overview.....	299
ii)    Fallujah: ‘A Dangerous Insurgent Hotbed’.....	303
The Islamic city: linking Fallujah to Sunni ‘fundamentalism’ and Saddam Hussein.....	306
A city backdrop for battle.....	313
City of darkness: Fallujah as an insurgent bastion.....	319
New Orleans meets Fallujah: shared discourses of ‘war zone’ cities...	324
iii)   Fallujan Citizens: Seldom Seen, Rarely Heard.....	326
A limited portrait of Ba’athists and Islamic extremism.....	329
‘Disappeared’: casualty counts and civilian opinions.....	339
US soldiers: highly visible individuals.....	350
iv)    The Implications of Absence.....	355
 <b>Conclusion – The Shadow of ‘Black Hawk Down’ .....</b>	<b>367</b>
i)     Imaging ‘Others’ in Mogadishu & Fallujah.....	371
ii)    Circulating Power: Changing Communication Networks Between 1993 & 2004 & Enduring Media Content Themes.....	375
iii)   Contributions to Knowledge & Further Research Recommendations.....	381
 <b>Appendix One – List of Media Items Surveyed.....</b>	<b>386</b>
 <b>Appendix Two – References for Somalia &amp; Fallujah Images Found Online.....</b>	<b>389</b>
 <b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>391</b>

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## Abstract

Mass media images and narratives have an important role to play in the workings of international and domestic politics. Technological developments, particularly in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have enabled a rapidly-growing 'economy' of images, information and means of communicating. These new commodities are circulated in an international sphere defined by shifting and unequal power relations. With this context in mind, this work undertakes an analysis of media representations of place and people in selected coverage of the Somalia intervention of 1992-1993 and the American sieges of Fallujah, Iraq in 2004, looking at both media narrative and imagery.

Despite technological changes and differences in political context, coverage content for each case study illustrates many similarities in representations of places and people. Both case studies highlight the continuing resonance and use of long-standing racial and colonial stereotypes to describe, or to 'disappear', 'other' people and places. The aim of this project has been to recognise and problematize these powerful dichotomizations between a primarily Western 'us' and 'others', illustrating the political nature of such attempts, their failings, and the consequences of these efforts at division. Exploration and exposure of the political nature of categorizations can assist in provoking a re-thinking not only of how 'others' are seen but of how 'we' construct our own identities.

**Keywords:** media, representation, conflict, intervention, discourse analysis, Somalia intervention, Fallujah

## List of Images, Figures & Tables

### Images

<b>Image 1-</b> a dragged body during ‘Black Hawk down’ .....	11
<b>Image 2-</b> contractor bodies hung in Fallujah.....	11
<b>Image 3-</b> a dead Somali woman.....	218
<b>Image 4-</b> ABC <i>Nightline</i> commercial cut-away.....	218
<b>Image 5-</b> Infographic showing military equipment.....	219
<b>Image 6(i)-</b> Marines in an armoured vehicle on a Mogadishu beach.....	220
<b>Image 6(ii)-</b> Marines come ashore to TV crews.....	221
<b>Image 7-</b> media follow troops, Paul Lowe image.....	222
<b>Image 8-</b> “terminator” equipment.....	223
<b>Image 9-</b> ‘famine’ mother and child.....	285
<b>Image 10-</b> human skeleton and clothes in dirt.....	286
<b>Image 11-</b> healthy Somali children with food.....	287
<b>Image 12-</b> Somali men selling <i>khat</i> .....	287
<b>Image 13-</b> hooded Somali man.....	288
<b>Image 14-</b> Somali men on ground, watched by US soldier.....	288
<b>Image 15(i)-</b> Mogadishu demonstrators.....	289
<b>Image 15(ii)-</b> Somalis carry wounded to safety.....	289
<b>Image 16-</b> Major Mike Collier.....	290
<b>Image 17(i)-</b> hooded, dragged body during ‘Black Hawk down’ .....	291
<b>Image 17(ii)-</b> unhooded, dragged body during ‘Black Hawk down’ .....	291
<b>Image 17(iii)-</b> dead US soldier during ‘Black Hawk down’ .....	292
<b>Image 18-</b> the captive Michael Durant.....	292
<b>Image 19-</b> “warlord” Aidid.....	293
<b>Image 20-</b> aerial shot of Fallujah being bombed.....	363
<b>Image 21-</b> Fallujan child and citizens near rubble.....	363
<b>Image 22-</b> US forces in Fallujah.....	364
<b>Image 23-</b> US tank shooting.....	364
<b>Image 24-</b> dead US soldier.....	365
<b>Image 25-</b> doctors and US troops in Fallujah hospital.....	365
<b>Image 26-</b> dead Fallujan infant.....	366
<b>Image 27-</b> insurgents in Fallujah, with weapons.....	366

All images are included at the end of their corresponding chapter.

**Figures**

**Figure 1-** graph of Somalia newspaper coverage..... 109

**Figure 2-** graph of ABC TV Somalia coverage..... 114

**Figure 3-** Somali states and regions.....161

**Figure 4-** Somali ethnic and clan distributions..... 162

**Figure 5-** Somali clan structure..... 163

**Figure 6-** *New York Times*, April 1, 2004 cover..... 358

**Figure 7-** *New York Post*, April 1, 2004 cover..... 359

**Figure 8-** *The Guardian*, April 1, 2004 cover.....360

**Figure 9-** *The New York Sun*, April 1, 2004 cover..... 361

**Figure 10-** *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2004 cover..... 362

Figures 3 to 10 included as inserts at the end of their corresponding chapter.

**Tables**

**Table 1-** Lexis Nexis coverage counts for Fallujah and CNN item numbers.....117

# Introduction - Watching 'Others', Watching Ourselves

*"The event is not what happens. The event is that which can be narrated."*<sup>1</sup>

This story begins with two moments of violence; still and moving images of each were captured by witnesses, allowing them to be widely watched by audiences in 'the West'<sup>2</sup>. One took place in Mogadishu, Somalia over ten years ago, in 1993. The bodies of several American soldiers, in Somalia on a mission to capture factional leader, General Mohammed Farah Aidid, were mutilated and dragged through Mogadishu streets following two deadly American helicopter crashes and fierce ground fighting in the city. The second event occurred in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. The bodies of four American security contractors were dragged and hung from a bridge after their SUVs were shot at and set on fire. These images and accompanying narratives of the desecrations resemble one another at several levels of analysis, which will be addressed by this project. A broader line of enquiry will explore the social world in which these images and narratives emerged and how certain interpretations of them affected relations between socially-constructed understandings of 'America' and 'others'<sup>3</sup>. The processes of creating and interpreting images and narratives are understood throughout this work as flexible and complex, with many possible outcomes, influenced by a wide variety of factors. In my exploration of these processes, the term 'discourse' will be used frequently; I follow David Howarth in his reading of Michel

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<sup>1</sup> Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>2</sup> 'The West' is a problematic term in many respects. The region covered in this term, often also called 'the global north', is diverse. This term, however, does continue to be used, often as a self-descriptor, by members of a group of wealthy, liberal democracies with various forms of capitalist economies, clustered geographically in western Europe and North America. It is often used with other groupings of world states to indicate one particular 'civilisation' in contrast to others, linked by geography or religion ('Africa', 'the Islamic world'). This term will be used throughout this work; when it is placed in quotations, a particular effort is generally being made to problematize or emphasize this term.

<sup>3</sup> This term will be used constantly throughout this work and refers to any person/thing/place defined as outside what the subject self considers home/me/us etc. It will most often be used in discussion of the ways in which 'the Western self' defines itself against a multitude of diverse peoples/places/things and is usually in quotation marks to highlight the constructed and changeable nature of this category.

Foucault to define this term, arguing that 'discourse' "refer(s) to historically specific systems of meaning which form the identities of subjects and objects...discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution which involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'."<sup>4</sup>

Mark Bowden<sup>5</sup> comments that the types of images which emerged from Mogadishu and Fallujah can be viewed as part of a grim history of 'lynching' photographs. Using lynching and hunting photographs as examples, political geographer David Campbell has written on the importance of social context in the construction of image meaning.<sup>6</sup> These two authors provide some important starting points for thinking through the significance of the Mogadishu and Fallujah images. In both cases, the self-conscious posing of the 'hunters' with their 'prey' positions not only the two categories of bodies in the image, to which a variety of interpretations can be applied, but also puts into question the relationship of the image-maker to the 'meaning' of the image. As Campbell remarks, "The photographers who produced the lynching photos were not simply spectators to the killing but part of the lynching, integral to the public status and meaning of the murder."<sup>7</sup> This statement reinforces the importance of the broader setting and conditions in which images are produced and viewed, a crucial area to which this project will continually return. Beyond being linked to the moment of the captured 'event', the modern image-maker also plays a pivotal role in the process of representation by bringing an event into a realm of broader consumption.

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<sup>4</sup> David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Bowden is the author of *Black Hawk Down*, a detailed study of the events of October 3-4, 1993 in Mogadishu. Bowden's book was the basis for a Ridley Scott-directed Hollywood film depicting the battle in Mogadishu.

<sup>6</sup> Bowden speaks specifically of events in Mogadishu and Fallujah as comparable to lynching photos. Campbell discusses lynching photography and links it to images of death and disaster in current media productions. See Mark Bowden, "The Lesson of Mogadishu", *Opinion Journal from The Wall Street Journal* Editorial Page, April 5, 2004, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110004911> (accessed July 1, 2007) and David Campbell, "Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media", *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, No. 1 (January 2004): 55-74.

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, "Horrific Blindness", 57.



Approaching 'horrific' images from an alternate angle, Bowden comments on the intentions of the subjects of the images. He believes, during both the Somalia and Fallujah events, that the crowds involved in the desecration acted with the desire to be seen and to have their activities 'captured' for wider viewing:

Lynching is deliberate. It is opportunistic rather than purely spontaneous, and it has a clear intent: to insult, to challenge and to frighten the enemy, and to excite and enlist allies. The mutilation and public display of bodies follows a distinct pattern. The victims are members of a despised Other, who are held in such contempt that they are considered less than human. Respectful treatment of the dead is the norm in all societies, and a tenet of all religions. Publicly flouting such basic dignities is a communal expression of hatred designed to insult and frighten. Display of the mutilated remains must be as public as possible.<sup>8</sup>

This statement raises many issues, touching upon some of the fundamental topics which this project will address. The hatred, violence and lack of empathy conveyed by these images were shocking for many Western and non-Western viewers, but, again, these actions need to be understood in terms of their conscious, and perhaps unconscious, situating within larger discourses. As Campbell writes, in parts of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America the lynching of African Americans and others deemed to be 'threats' to the predominately white 'norm' were not uncommon and were moments to be celebrated and remembered. Many lynching photos that remain are in postcard format, designed as 'keepsakes' of these events. This 'understanding' of lynching, however, even during its time, was hardly a stable or uncontested one. Campbell notes that the dawning of the civil rights movement and the dramatic shifts in social attitudes in late 1950s and 1960s America meant that these brutal images could be read and used politically in very different ways, to provoke horror and to increase demands for equal rights and fair treatment for African Americans.<sup>9</sup> Such research offers both a note of caution and a glimmer of hope when

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<sup>8</sup> Bowden, "The Lesson of Mogadishu".

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, "Horrific Blindness", 57.

contemplating the depressing images of Somalia and Fallujah. These images need not only function as a means of spreading hate; they may also provoke political actions designed to increase understanding and to end violence. Following Howarth's explanation of how discourses function, "discourses are contingent and historical constructions, which are always vulnerable to those political forces excluded in their production, as well as the dislocatory effects of events beyond their control."<sup>10</sup>

The note of caution, however, brings us to a major theme running throughout this work: the creation of difference through narrative and imagery, a political and an ethical act in itself, and the political and cultural affects of this production. Both sets of desecration images from Mogadishu and Fallujah were deemed 'shocking'. Why? How do these images both challenge and draw upon existing discourses of people and places? Discussion of these questions will involve looking at the races and genders of those involved in the events, the histories and countries where they occurred, and, particularly, the portrayal of certain groups as 'naturally' prone to violence. How do these images solidify or throw into question for audiences who 'we' are and why 'they' hate 'us'? How has 'our' relationship with 'them' arrived at these points?

These questions will require a reconsideration of how 'the West' defines itself against 'others' and the various omissions these definitional boundaries allow and encourage. This exploration should take into account not only the images and words seen and heard in both immediate cases, but also during other points in Western media stories of Somalia and Fallujah. Following the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, I understand the processes of contesting and fortifying various concepts as ongoing, but with continuous historical ruptures. The aim of particular discourses, labelled by Laclau and Mouffe as hegemonic projects, to construct and stabilize specific systems of meaning can never be complete or total. Conversely, however, one should not assume "the total diffusion of power within the social, as this would blind the analysis to the presence of nodal points and to the partial concentrations of power

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<sup>10</sup> Howarth, *Discourse*, 9.

existing in every concrete social formation.”<sup>11</sup> This study, therefore, looks at the content of images and narratives in order to explore their linkages with hegemonic discourses of race, colonialism and gender. This will involve the identification and consideration of those who create, distribute, perpetuate and contest such hegemonic discourses. When dealing with this aspect of representational processes, this project will focus overwhelmingly on the area of Western mass media production and the media’s relationship with Western governments, but other organisations and audiences themselves also have important impacts on how imagery and narrative is created, interpreted and spread.

These two sets of images provide a launching point for discussion of media representation of the Somalia intervention of 1992-93 and events in Fallujah in 2004. Providing a wider and deeper breadth of coverage material for analysis and will help to locate, explore and challenge hegemonic ways of understanding the moments when both desecrations took place. The continuing power and resonance of hegemonic discourses of race, gender and colonial place will be evident from this study’s empirical work on Somalia and Fallujah. This being said, disruptions to these hegemonies are increasingly occurring for a variety of reasons, forcing transformations and exposing internal contradictions in such hegemonies. To study these discursive forces in the case of Somalia, the years 1992 and 1993 will be examined, looking at newspaper articles written about Somalia during these two years in both *The New York Times* and *The Times* of London. Television coverage from the BBC and the American television network, ABC, will also be studied in order to span media genres.

The Fallujah case study is a more recent period of media representation of conflict, which will provide useful comparative points with research on Somalia. It will allow comment on the current situation for media reporting of conflict; significant changes in technology and military doctrine have taken place since Somalia. With reference to the theoretical situation of this work, outlined above, the Fallujah case

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<sup>11</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 142.

study shows the persistence of hegemonic discourses over time and illustrates that these discourses are not geographically limited. Importantly, the usage of these discourses by Western interveners in diverse locations illustrates how they function both as efforts to identify and position an 'us' as well as to create and define outside, often conflictual and dangerous 'others'. This said, Fallujah is a valuable event for study on its own terms and can stand independently to make important assertions about media coverage. Newspaper analysis for this case involved several top British national publications and *The New York Times*; television coverage was limited to American CNN coverage. In both case studies, the very broad categories of 'place' and 'people' were used as initial analytical bases for examples from coverage, which were further sub-divided thematically for closer study. As will be seen in further theoretical background to this work, these categories overlap and link to each other in many ways and are fundamental aspects of the hegemonic discourses investigated in this work. For the purposes of this project, they also offer a means of recognising the importance of 'setting' and 'characters' in media stories of Somalia and Fallujah, which was evident when viewing and reading the coverage.

Beginning broadly, the first chapter of this work will outline and situate the theoretical tenets on which it rests. Its approach is poststructural; while a significant debt is owed to neo-Marxist thinkers who explore the political and economic structures in which 'cultural' organisations such as the mass media function, my understanding of the interactions between media, governments, various organisations, and audiences is more fluid than that of many neo-Marxists. As an alternate starting point, Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge is useful for discussing visual and textual discourses, which outline and 'normalise' what it is possible to know and how it is possible to act. Foucault's work has also been extremely influential in the area of colonial and postcolonial studies, where many theorists have used his concepts to unravel the complex relationships between predominantly Western colonisers and colonised 'others'. These discussions will be particularly relevant for the work of this project because both case studies involve previously-colonised, predominately-Muslim

areas. Postcolonial theorists have also been heavily influenced by the work of Jacques Derrida, whose 'deconstruction' of binary linguistic categories in order to expose the contingency and artificiality of many such attempts at separation is also outlined in depth. Derrida's approach has greatly influenced the way in which the Somalia and Fallujah case studies were analysed in this work.

A further section of the theoretical background chapter discusses various approaches for interpreting images, particularly photographs, of suffering, death and disaster. Broader discussions involving the representation of 'others' and the social, political and economic conditions of representation in 'the West' are narrowed to look specifically at the products of visual media. A final section targets media representations of war and death, moving the focus of the chapter to a more specialised area of literature with direct relevance to both case studies. In these studies, two broad categories of research are highlighted: those focused on analysing the complex, structural relationships between media, governments, organisations and audiences and those primarily interested in analysing the content of media production. The empirical work of this project is more heavily based in the study of media content, but it nonetheless recognises the importance of linking trends in content to unequal structural relationships which often help to perpetuate certain discourses over others.

The second chapter picks up at this point to look specifically at the case studies used by this particular work and its approach for analysing them. While the theoretical themes outlined in the first chapter are key components of the 'lens' through which the coverage case studies are viewed, Chapter Two explains why the Somalia intervention and events in Fallujah in 2004 were chosen as case studies. It also describes in depth the media sources that were analysed in each case study and how choices were made regarding which media coverage to view and read.

Chapter Three, the final 'introductory' chapter before substantive analysis of the case studies begins, provides a historical background to the situation in Somalia. As it is the primary case study for this work, I considered it important to provide readers with an overview of Somalia's political, economic and social situation, briefly

throughout its history but more specifically at the time of the UN/US intervention in 1992-1993. Information of this sort is not often provided in any depth in media coverage, but is useful for readers and researchers attempting to analyse what issues coverage may have under/overstated or omitted altogether. This chapter will draw on the work of well-known anthropologists and historians of Somalia as well as the work of those who have challenged some accepted accounts of Somali culture. The aims of this chapter are to highlight the colonised nature of much background knowledge about Somalia and to expose a history of ties between Somalia and 'the West' which challenge the frequent attempts, in media coverage and beyond, to polarise the two. As Susan Carruthers suggests, quoting the work of colonial theorist, Frantz Fanon, "Africa surely looms large in the production of the West, whose material and mental dependencies on Africa are often denied and/or projected as unidirectional needs and claims made by "them" of "us."<sup>12</sup>

The following three chapters, Four, Five and Six, are where the discursive analysis of media coverage first of the Somalia intervention and then of events in Fallujah takes place. Coverage of the Somalia intervention is explored through three overarching themes, which were developed following a reading and viewing of the coverage. Chapter Four, "Somalia & 'Africa': 'Dark' Places, 'Failed' States", analyses depictions of Somalia as a place, looking closely at discourses of colonialism, 'failed' states and the 'developing world' as a site of danger for 'the West'. Chapter Five contains two large sections, which explore representations of people, both generally and specifically. "Stereotypes in Somalia: Passive Victims, Aggressive Killers and Their 'Saviours'" looks at media discussion of Somali people generally and "Aidid: "the man who makes Somalia worse"" specifically, and briefly, investigates mentions of Somali factional leader, Mohammed Farah Aidid. The often-interwoven discourses of race and gender will be particularly important in this chapter. The Fallujah case study (Chapter Six) will be introduced with a short amount of background information to contextualize

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Carruthers, "Tribalism and Tribulation: Media Constructions of 'African Savagery' and 'Western Humanitarianism' in the 1990s" in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allan & Barbie Zelizer, 157 (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2004).

it, as was done in greater depth for the Somalia study. Although circumstances were substantially different in Somalia and Fallujah in terms of the involved parties, conditions for the media and overarching geopolitical narratives, the categories of place and people remained a relevant way of dividing coverage examples. This in itself opens broad areas for comment and comparison regarding 'the West's' relationship with 'others'. "Fallujah: 'A Dangerous Insurgent Hotbed'" looks at the ways in which the city of Fallujah was often demonised as a place. "Fallujan Citizens: Seldom Seen, Rarely Heard" outlines the non-appearance of Fallujah's residents in several media organisations' narratives and images, particularly around the periods of American siege. All three chapters sum-up general themes and findings for each case study, which are then explored in the final, concluding chapter.

"The Shadow of 'Black Hawk Down'" will begin with media comparisons of the contractor deaths in Fallujah with the 'Black Hawk down' events. The brevity of this moment can perhaps be read as indicative of the unwillingness, particularly of those in the US administration, to recognise the similar effects of 'othering' occurring in both cases. This concluding chapter will discuss the often-tragic results of representing 'other' people and places as fundamentally unlike and unconnected to 'us'. It will also insist upon the contradictory nature of many such binary distinctions, some of which will have been deconstructed in earlier chapters. Additionally, the disappearance of 'others' in many media and government representations of events will be discussed, as an ultimate form of rejecting contact, connection and harm to 'others'. Comparison of the two case studies will cover not only the contents of media items but will also comment on important changes in structures affecting media production of news in the twelve years between the two cases. Final suggestions for future research will also be included.

Returning briefly to the two moments of violence, Bowden's earlier quoted comments about the symbolic power of the desecrated bodies are important. For many American and other viewers, the images of the bodies said much about the horrors of 'them', the desecrators, and implied that these 'barbaric', 'inhuman' horrors could have

no possible 'civilised' response. Some acts are 'beyond the pale'; the perpetrators of this violence are therefore not like 'us'. In the case of Somalia, abandonment followed; in Iraq, the American military attacked Fallujah, the killing of the contractors having further legitimized it as a target.

Alternately, for those who participated in these acts, the bodies could be viewed as an attempt at an exchange of sorts, a violent effort by 'them' to be heard by the 'US'. The underlying text might read: "We do not want your presence here; we can also inflict damage on 'you' and to those who represent you here if needs be". Indeed, the words 'exchange' and 'response' beg the question 'to what could these actions be a response?', a query which is often delegitimized by Western, and particularly American, discourses of self-righteousness and eternal innocence. This question, in turn, reveals more bodies, of 'others', often unseen, in fact, frequently absent from the Western media. The politics of which bodies are created and shown, and when, and with what outcomes, is the issue which this project will now address. These questions are of vital importance, not only for governments, organisations and the media, which are most frequently associated with the creation, presentation and distribution of information, but also for audiences. If *all* bodies are to matter, a 'we' must challenge and question the boundaries that are drawn around 'our' collective name.





**Image 1:** US soldier's body – Mogadishu, October 1993



**Image 2:** US contractors' bodies – Fallujah, March 2004

## Chapter One – Theorising the Media, Discourse & the Visual

This chapter will outline and critique theoretical work which has been influential for this project. While specific authors will often not be explicitly mentioned in more empirically-focused chapters to follow, it is important for readers to bring an understanding of literature relevant to this work's analytical approach to these later sections. This task begins by situating the project as a whole within a broad history of Marxist-influenced cultural theory, with a particular debt to poststructural scholars Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. The focus of the theoretical lens will then be 'zoomed in' to look specifically at the work of Foucault and Derrida and their influences on the study of postcolonial regions and research of these areas. Particular emphasis will be placed on the ways in which these parts of the world have been represented. A section will then be devoted to theoretical work on how photographs are created and interpreted, looking at the potential affects of images on societal groups. Given the fundamental role of various forms of visual imagery across several media types, particularly in television production but also in newspapers and online, it is important to deconstruct and politicize the processes of image creation and production. Pictures can then be regarded as symbols which function within 'economies' of vision and discourse, rather than merely objects in and of themselves.

A final, narrower focus will then be taken to discuss theoretical, and some empirical, work which, like this study, has been significantly influenced by some of the broader neo-Marxist and poststructural literature. This section will look specifically at research on the mass media's interactions with governments, audiences and non-governmental organisations. In particular, the media's role in representing violence, suffering and conflicts will be developed in order to prepare readers for an analysis of the specific coverage case studies. Notably, this section will include significantly more work which investigates in depth the political and economic networks in which media operate. As P. Eric Louw suggests in his work, *The Media & Cultural Production*, both

political-economic and cultural studies approaches to analysing media have important insights to offer. This project recognises both approaches, although a more culturally-situated one will dominate the case study analyses.<sup>1</sup>

## Key Theoretical Bases for Studying Media

Theoretical positions on the place of the mass media in society and their relationship with viewers, listeners and readers often have similarities with debates about other forms of technology and their effects on the conditions of human life and knowledge production. During the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan became a leading optimist regarding new and expanding forms of media technology, such as television and radio.<sup>2</sup> McLuhan envisioned a universal human consciousness developed through the act of watching and listening to mass media that would thereby create a 'global village' effect. This ideal, however, has been, and continues to be, challenged by those who doubt that the effects of expanding media reach to 'the masses' will be wholly beneficial or will have primarily community-expanding outcomes. These more pessimistic scholars often draw on Marxist theory but have challenged traditional Marxism's 'base/superstructure' divide. Frequently inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci, they have expanded study of 'superstructural' phenomena and attempted to explain the place of 'culture' in greater depth. Gramsci believed that the elite's control and use of social and cultural structures, like the media, to maintain the support of the oppressed masses for the capitalist system was as crucial to this system as bourgeois control of commodity production.<sup>3</sup> Crucially, winning over working classes was not seen by Gramsci as a purely coercive effort; it involved positively drawing various groups together in agreements over particular ideas. Gramsci called this strategy winning 'hegemony'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Eric Louw, *The Media & Cultural Production* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 2.

<sup>2</sup> See M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) and Q. Fiore and M. McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message: an Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> See David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 88 and Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Howarth, *Discourse*, 90.

Although a great number of cultural studies approaches have been influenced by Marx and Gramsci, two broad groupings emerged which are relevant for this project: structuralists and poststructuralists/postmodernists. In the case of poststructuralists and postmodernists, very few thinkers categorised in these groups have ever accepted such labelling. Differences between 'poststructuralism' and 'postmodernism' are difficult to draw, although Ben Agger suggests a potentially useful distinction in his work by classifying poststructuralism as a particular group of theories focused on knowledge and language "whereas postmodernism... is a theory of society, culture, and history."<sup>5</sup> This project utilises theories which extend from both sides of this proposed distinction.

Structuralists and poststructuralists/postmodernists follow, to a large extent, the 'linguistic turn' in Western philosophy, which encouraged an analytical focus on the uses of language and its societal rules of operation.<sup>6</sup> Structurally-influenced theorists have generally argued that the linguistic ordering principles of a social group are the major determinant of discourses and human consciousness within that society. As Steven Best and Douglas Kellner suggest: "The structuralist revolution deployed holistic analyses that analyzed phenomena in terms of parts and wholes, defining a structure as the interrelation of parts within a common system...Structural analysis aimed at objectivity, coherence, rigour, and truth, and claimed scientific status for its theories."<sup>7</sup>

Structuralist approaches were developed for use in anthropology by Claude Levi-Strauss, in psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan and in a re-development of Marxism by Louis Althusser. In the setting of a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing post-World War II France, new forms of media, consumerism and communications became major areas of interest, taken up by academics such as Roland Barthes, Guy Debord and

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<sup>5</sup> Ben Agger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance", *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 112.

<sup>6</sup> The 'linguistic turn' is often said to have its roots in the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913).

<sup>7</sup> Steven Best & Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 18-19.

Jean Baudrillard. Barthes and Baudrillard later moved away from structural approaches but were strongly influenced by this body of work. According to Best and Kellner, an important unifying principle of the structuralist approach was its challenge to humanist social science theory, which had dominated Western philosophical traditions from Descartes to Sartre. "The subject was dismissed, or radically decentred, as merely an effect of language, culture, or the unconscious, and denied causal or creative efficacy...On this model, meaning was not the creation of the transparent intentions of an autonomous subject; the subject itself was constituted by its relations within language, so that subjectivity was seen as a social and linguistic construct."<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this project, structuralism is primarily important because its ideas were often influential to a loosely-labelled collection of poststructural thinkers, whose insights inspired much of this work's style and approach. The theories of more structurally-oriented theorists such as Louis Althusser and Guy Debord, for example, became points of reference and challenge for thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard. Alternately, theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas and Roland Barthes, who worked outside many major debates on societal structure versus human agency, can be linked to Foucault and Baudrillard in various ways.

Contrasting with the above thinkers, American linguistic scholar and cultural critic Noam Chomsky's work on the political economy of media and communications industries is also of importance to this project, in its own right but also because of his influence on other media scholars. Chomsky's work can be loosely linked to structuralism in the sense that he maintains a firm faith in the value of a systematic, scientific approach to his studies. Following in a more neo-Marxist vein than many of the abovementioned theorists, Chomsky also remains more focused on exposing the specific locations and figures he sees as continuing cultural and economic domination in modern society: governmental and business leaders. This is a clear differentiating factor between Chomsky and poststructuralists, who tend to view 'power' as being a far more diffuse and unstable factor. The value of Chomsky's work persists for this

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<sup>8</sup> Best & Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, 19.

project, however, as it illustrates how much of media control is concentrated in a few areas, and investigates the effects of this situation on coverage content. Despite various and multiple resistances to dominant ways of conceptualizing events, sites with recurring and consistent power and influence need to be recognised.

Very broadly, those labelled poststructuralist/postmodernist tend to view social structures and discourses as more fluid and subject to change than structuralists and analysts such as Chomsky. They have critiqued the presumed objectivity of structuralism in favour of a strongly historicist approach to social studies. Derrida, for example, has challenged what he refers to as Western philosophy's commitment to a 'metaphysics of presence', which encompasses the assumption of many theories that subjects can have an unmediated access to reality.<sup>9</sup> Poststructuralists are for the most part sceptical of politics and theories of knowledge which posit an often-hidden meaning or origin of society or 'Mankind', to be reached by moving beyond existing conditions. Those researchers using a poststructural approach in the field of media and communications have often investigated how audiences may reinterpret or challenge various dominant media discourses, feats that would involve a creative reshaping of existing social codes. This approach is in line with the support of many poststructural thinkers for forms of 'micropolitics', which would see a variety of decentralized, identity-based groups challenging overarching claims to power and knowledge, rather than global movements based primarily around economic classes.

Baudrillard, for example, altered his initial pessimistic position on bourgeois media control to challenge the idea of a passive and alienated public. He suggested that frequent mass failures to respond to certain media 'events' in ways expected by media creators could be seen as eruptions which challenge particular world views.<sup>10</sup> Recent commentators such as Angela McRobbie have also made an effort to illustrate

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<sup>9</sup> For more in depth explanation, see Best & Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* and Agger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance", 105-131.

<sup>10</sup> See Mike Gane, *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews* (London: Routledge, 1993). For a valuable collection of excerpts from some key works of Baudrillard, see Mark Poster ed. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

the ways in which specific marginalised and oppressed groups including Black Britons and women have successfully resisted their representation in much mass media.<sup>11</sup>

The work of poststructural and/or postmodern theorists informs this work primarily because it rejects the necessity for an idea of objective 'truth' as an ultimate goal, or possibility, for news coverage or otherwise. I concur with ideas which suggest that an unmediated access to 'reality' is not possible and that only a historicized position on social relations can be sustained. This project takes the view that media effort should be focused on presenting a diversity of voices and opinions, rather than on locating a singular 'truth'. In line with a more poststructural understanding of ethics, media should facilitate an ongoing questioning of divides between 'us' and 'others' in contemporary global society. The content of empirical material studied for this work is viewed through a deconstructive filter, which aims to expose and debate the ways in which differences between particular selves, an 'us', and 'others' are created, consolidated and thrown into question.

This project is thus theoretically indebted to poststructuralism, particularly the deconstructive and genealogical studies of Derrida and Foucault respectively. The work of these authors will be explored in more depth below. The particular media selected for close analysis, however, justify reflection on Chomsky's work, given that they are overwhelmingly items produced by large media companies, which operate in a world of increasing consolidation of media ownership in the hands of a decreasing number of elites. I would argue that all the theorists mentioned above generally accept the notion that cultural codes of understanding, which contain visual and textual elements, have been socially constructed throughout history, frequently in conditions of inequality. Drawing on the work of the abovementioned theorists, one could specifically suggest that the narrative and image content of modern media are constructed within particular politico-economic conditions, those of late modern capitalism, which influence the parameters of media coverage. While new forms of

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<sup>11</sup> See Angela McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture", in *Media Studies: a Reader*, eds. Paul Marris & Sue Thornham, 391 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

media, particularly on the Internet, are emerging to challenge the coverage of large corporate and public media organisations, this work suggests that, in the case of two studies of primarily corporate media coverage roughly a decade apart, there is only a minimal effort at greater plurality in coverage from several of these particular media sources. Having laid out the broad theoretical spheres in which this project sits, further sections of this chapter will now critique the contributions of important theorists for this work in depth.

### **Mediation, Power/Knowledge & Society**

Like Gramsci, almost all of the major theoretical influences of this work have themselves been somewhat challenged or inspired by the writings of Louis Althusser. Althusser built upon Gramsci's conception of cultural 'hegemony' through his notion of 'ideological state apparatuses'. For Althusser, 'ideology' is the representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real [productive] conditions of existence."<sup>12</sup> The individual's relationship to their conditions of existence is always imaginary in the capitalist system for Althusser because there are real, objective relationships between individuals and their means of production that are hidden or distorted by capitalism. The imaginary situation, however, becomes materially based in human activities through capitalist social institutions and apparatuses, which support certain practices.

The primary effect of ideology is to develop and enforce individuals' beliefs in their ability to constitute themselves as various kinds of subjects; the concept of 'ideology' has thus often been closely associated with that of 'discourse'.<sup>13</sup> According to Althusser, certain media, such as television advertisements, are thus structured to help individuals recognize themselves as particular subjectivities with 'unique' preferences

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<sup>12</sup> This is Mark Poster quoting Althusser in Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 54. Parentheses are author's own.

<sup>13</sup> Purvis and Hunt suggest that, although 'ideology' and 'discourse' are often used almost interchangeably, ideology has primarily emerged from a base in Marxist theory whereas discourse is more linked to the linguistic turn in social science and semiotic methods. Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...", *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (Sep. 1993), 474.



and viewpoints in direct contradiction to their real relationship with the controlling and exploiting means of production. Individuals, therefore, believe themselves to be free subjects, able to autonomously make decisions by consumption in capitalist society, while, in fact, their position and opinions are dictated by conditions of the capitalist economy.<sup>14</sup> Media audiences, for example, might believe that they are able to develop their own 'objective' understanding of world events based on the accounts of television broadcasters or newspaper columnists. Althusser would likely argue, however, that such media in fact offer a highly ideologically-driven viewpoint, based on the degree of their control by corporate elite through advertising geared to attract certain target groups. Althusser retains the idea that his 'scientific', neo-Marxist approach to analysing ideological state apparatuses can discover the objective truth to the workings of these bodies. This idea of a 'true' account of societal workings being discoverable is contested by most of the following major theorists who influence this work. The exception is Chomsky who, despite some foundational differences from Althusser, including a more humanist approach to the subject, comes to generally similar conclusions. For the purposes of this work, Althusser's privileging of capitalism as the basis for his societal analysis is not necessary. Althusser's notion of the modern self as being constructed and created through its interaction with state and capitalist apparatuses, including most media, however, is important for conceptualising how various societal discourses are created, developed and perpetuated.

Michel Foucault was a contemporary of Althusser and the two were strongly influenced by each other's work. Foucault also explores how the complex self-understandings of everyday subjects both shape and are shaped by ideological, often media-driven, apparatuses of the state system and capitalism. In his early studies of madness, medical practice and the history of social sciences, Foucault illustrated ways in which the definitions, practices and core assumptions of these fields have changed in

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<sup>14</sup> See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses", *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (London: NLB, 1971).

response to a variety of factors throughout different historical epochs.<sup>15</sup> For Foucault, history-writing was not to be a cumulative process, producing histories of Mankind or Capitalism, but a more disjointed affair, conducting 'genealogies' of how specific societal groups and technologies have been constituted in various historical periods.<sup>16</sup> The role of the intellectual was to reject philosophy's traditional, singular gaze and to be critical insofar as she/he renounces the authority of the 'centre' and moves about witnessing life from a multiplicity of marginal positions.<sup>17</sup> Foucault suggests that attempts at dominating or controlling understandings of human life are enacted both discursively and physically through many different social structures in complex, often hierarchical ways. Foucault's development of the term 'discourse' is very expansive, referring not only to words and constructions of concepts but to entire programs of knowledge creation and state-generated programs. These forms of knowledge, belief and practice are seen as shaping our material world rather than merely describing a pre-existing one.

By the mid-1970s, Foucault was involved in exploring how 'knowledge/power' hierarchies come into existence and maintain dominance in specific times and places; importantly, these structures were seen to be composed of both discursive and non-discursive elements, such as administrative bodies, state organisations etc. He stated in a 1975 interview that "power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress...If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at the level of desire- and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it".<sup>18</sup> For Foucault, power is not something that can be escaped in any sort of utopic 'end of history'. While aspects of the modern state system sometimes appear to function solely in a mode of surveillance and silencing of dissent, discourses of knowledge often create 'productive' power that

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<sup>15</sup> See Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Madness and Civilisation*.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 71 & 79.

<sup>17</sup> David Michael Levin ed., *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 59.

enables and encourages Western societies to think and act in certain ways, believing this knowledge to be 'true', 'right' etc.

As mentioned above, this sort of power can function at a micro-level, outside what might traditionally be seen to be places where the state impinges on individuals' lives. Individuals are created and influenced by power yet also hold power through their non-acceptance/acceptance, spreading and adapting of discourses themselves. The importance of vision and imagery, as well as text and language, for Foucault is obvious in many ways, including physically in his analysis of the Panopticon, a form of nineteenth century prison architecture which he associated with the invasive, oppressive gaze of authority upon individuals. In Foucault's theory, the possibility of this external gaze was meant to facilitate the individual's internalization of such forms of surveillance by self-censoring, monitoring and modifying their own thoughts and behaviour in conformity with the norms and beliefs of state disciplinarians.<sup>19</sup>

Foucault is often critiqued for not providing any normative criteria for evaluating the workings of power; it is seen as a "complex strategic relation in a given society".<sup>20</sup> This is perhaps where he breaks most obviously from his structuralist and Marxist predecessors, by refusing in his later work to see power as a primarily top-down, imposed or necessarily state-driven force nor as a factor used to mask 'truths' of various economic systems.<sup>21</sup> Commentators such as Robert Young, however, have come to Foucault's defense in this matter, arguing that he does not remove the possibility of resisting various forms of power as such but merely moves away from a theory of resistance centred on the individual subject as a sovereign agent. For Foucault, there is no special or privileged position that can be reached outside the operations of power from which subjects might resist. Subversive resistance develops due to the fact that oppressed 'others' are always already inside the workings of

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 71-72.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 236.

<sup>21</sup> For in-depth discussion of these ideas, see Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.

'power', 'reason' and 'the same', which are therefore partly constituted by that which they repress.<sup>22</sup>

While he did not study media and communications phenomena explicitly, Foucault's work is clearly important for understanding the development and use of these technologies at several levels of analysis. The media function as a means for determining what constitutes 'knowledge' and 'truth' and for distributing it; they can thus be seen as places where institutionalized power may be concentrated in modern societies. The creation, packaging and distribution of knowledge through media sources can largely be seen as a 'productive' form of power. While it is possible for media to act in oppressive or restricting ways, media discourses are generally understood in the West as means of spreading ideas and 'educating' audiences in particular ways. Media can function in a multiplicity of forms and can be used by many groups; they can become a space where competing and 'subversive' discourses are articulated as well as being a means of top-down communication with masses for elites. The variety of discourses represented in mainstream media, however, is often debatable. At a different analytical level, Foucault's 'genealogical' approach of historicizing and challenging prevailing ways of conceptualising particular people and places is a key theoretical strategy of this project. Although this work aims to illustrate how the media function to create and distribute information, analysing and critiquing the content of media items will be its primary goal.

Two other theorists whose works are relatable to that of Foucault and the project being undertaken here are Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord. Martin Jay suggests in his seminal work, *Downcast Eyes* that Debord's work responds to the same general questions as Foucault's while using the opposite viewpoint. While Foucault is concerned about "the disciplining and normalizing effects of being the object of the gaze", Debord "stresses the dangers of being its subject."<sup>23</sup> For Debord, the greatest concern for modern subjects is seduction by the 'spectacle' of images that modern life

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<sup>22</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 86.

<sup>23</sup> See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in 20<sup>th</sup> Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 416.

has become rather than a normalising gaze from outside. The 'spectacle' for Debord is not a collection of images but a social situation in which connections between people become increasingly mediated by images. Everything that has previously been directly experienced moves into the representational sphere of specialised images, which presents itself as something enormously positive and indisputable.<sup>24</sup>

Debord's work is greatly indebted to neo-Marxism and Althusser. Like Althusser, he sees the media as generally a form of unidirectional communication with the masses and as a form of class domination utilised by the bourgeoisie. The 'spectacle' is described as a form of capital at such a late stage of capitalism that it has become based on imagery and discourse, rather than commodities.<sup>25</sup> Comparable to Althusser's view of ideology, Debord suggests that the 'spectacle' can be used to reproduce and create differences, separation and atomism between 'viewing' subjects who might otherwise share class similarities. This separation occurs despite the fact that modern societies' technological developments are to a significant extent actually decreasing geographical and societal distances across national borders.

Debord is in many ways an anti-humanist and a less-empirical alternative to Chomsky; many of their conclusions about the functions of media are similar. Although this work is in many ways sympathetic to Debord's locating of media as a form of 'spectacle', which can be limiting and divisive in the discourses it presents, I would resist a view of current mass media as a primarily unidirectional means of communication. Public response to media imagery and discourse is increasingly surveyed, and media often act and produce coverage based on their interpretations of how their audiences will respond. While this work will look at the ways in which 'spectacular' news coverage works to both make visible and obscure particular perspectives, it will do so from a position which is more clearly developed in this work through use of Foucault.

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<sup>24</sup> See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> See paragraphs 24 & 34 in Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*.

Baudrillard's early thought is relatively close to that of Debord and Althusser. It is his later writings that are most important for this work, however, as his interest in Western media coverage of conflict is made explicit in these publications. At first Baudrillard studied different societies where consumption, rather than production, had become the dominant mechanism of capitalism. Consumerism and consumption were, for Baudrillard, fast becoming viewed as common social factors while destroying old concepts of Marxist class consciousness through their atomizing and alienating force on individuals.<sup>26</sup> Baudrillard soon moved away from this neo-Marxist stance, however, towards a more ironic and less comprehensive position than poststructuralists such as Foucault and Derrida. He critiqued Marxist-inspired and structural theories, which argue that surface appearances mask a hidden structure or essence, to favour a model based on what he called 'seduction', an analytic approach which would focus on the new world of floating and unfixed images, objects and networks of discourse, rather than attempting to go beyond 'surface' features of cultural life. This term ushered in Baudrillard's assertion that the Western world now operates without clear distinctions between object/representation or thing/idea. It is instead increasingly constructed of models or 'simulacra', which have no referent or ground in a reality outside their own systems of relation.<sup>27</sup>

According to Baudrillard, these simulacra are 'hyper-real' constructs such as electronic capital and digitized information that now occupy a privileged position in society, usurping old universalized categories of 'space', 'time', 'truth' etc. Thus, Baudrillard "has moved from the TV ad which, however, never completely erases the commodity it solicits, to the TV newscast which creates the news if only to be able to narrate it".<sup>28</sup> At this stage, Baudrillard reached a pessimistic and negative position with regard to the citizenry of Western states. With the collapse of metanarratives such as

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<sup>26</sup> This period of Baudrillard's work corresponds with his publication of: *The System of Objects* (1968), *Consumer Society* (1970), and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972) according to Mark Poster ed., *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> See Mike Gane, "Ch. 53- Baudrillard", in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, eds. Simon Critchley & William R. Schroeder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Poster, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 6.

liberalism and Marxism, the old, rational ways of understanding the subject had become outdated. Subjects were now viewed primarily as consumers by Baudrillard, and they are thus vulnerable to manipulation by simulacra. His next analytic stage of 'fatal strategy' theory-making focused upon the point of view of hyper-real objects rather than human subjects.<sup>29</sup>

By 1985, Baudrillard wrote ironically regarding potential responses of the public to a situation in which the media present an excess of information which, because it is often in simulated rather than representational format, cannot be adequately responded to or engaged with. His highly-criticized answer to this dilemma was silence and passivity. The viewer masses recognize that they are being talked at by the media with no possibility of response; they thus react with hyperconformity, giving up their will to choose and their will to be studied and to be known by the media and its pollsters. Baudrillard concluded his short work on the masses by asking questions about the contradictory roles the media can play: "Are the mass media on the side of power in the manipulation of the masses, or are they on the side of the masses in the liquidation of meaning, in the violence done to meaning? Is it the media that fascinate the masses, or is it the masses who divert the media into showmanship?"<sup>30</sup>

Baudrillard's work, particularly later texts, are often criticized due to their hyperbole, lack of sustained analysis and totalizing claims. I accept all these factors as issues which have in many ways prevented greater academic engagement with Baudrillard's work. As explained by Baudrillard scholar Mark Poster, "He writes about particular experiences, television images, as if nothing else in society mattered, extrapolating a bleak view of the world from that limited base."<sup>31</sup> Despite the analytical limitations of Baudrillard's concepts as a result of his style and approach, his work is nonetheless valuable to this project at many stages. Baudrillard's study of discourse networks and simulations in media is a basis from which this work begins. It accepts

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<sup>29</sup> This period corresponds to Baudrillard's later works, *On Seduction* (1979), *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981) and *Fatal Strategies* (1983).

<sup>30</sup> Baudrillard, "The Masses: the Implosion of the Social in the Media", in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 218.

<sup>31</sup> Poster, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 7.

the idea that such representations, often without material referents, have important consequences, both discursively and materially, for societies. While this project will not look specifically at strategies of media reception by audiences, Baudrillard's later questioning of the relationship between media producers and audiences will likely be important for further work into the dynamics of this relationship.<sup>32</sup> His analysis of the Gulf War of 1991 will be discussed in depth in a further section, where his work's relevance for this project will also become clear.

Neither Debord's nor Baudrillard's societal analyses have been as influential to this project as those of Foucault, whose impact on theories of social discourses and institutions will also be seen in the next section. Some of Debord's and Baudrillard's concepts and vocabulary, however, are more specifically relevant for media studies than those of Foucault and are thus helpful for enhancing descriptions of how I interpret the media as operating in Western societies.

### **Representing 'Others'**

Foucault's ideas regarding the concept of power/knowledge and his genealogies of different discourses have been very influential to the work of postcolonial theorists. These authors have criticised the Western tradition of colonising 'others' through the absorption and the oppression of the cultures of the colonised as well as, equally importantly, their environments and material resources. These forms of colonialism are seen to consist of dominating forms of power, in a variety of types of overt exploitation and control, and also in more 'productive' forms with efforts to create 'colonial subjects' and to help them achieve Western norms and 'standards' of efficiency, technology and development. All these terms, and indeed the entire discourse of 'development', are loaded with very particular meanings of what it is to be 'civilised' or 'primitive' human beings in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first

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<sup>32</sup> William Merrin has helped to illustrate Baudrillard's continuing relevance for media studies through discussion of his case studies of Gulf War I, 9/11, and the Afghan and Iraq wars, see William Merrin, *Baudrillard and the Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Polity Press, 2005).



centuries, just as Foucault showed that concepts such as 'madness' have been imbued with different meanings throughout various epochs.

These shifting meanings become tied not only to oppressed groups but also to the self-understandings of colonisers or, in the case of madness, the 'sane'. As postcolonial theorist Robert Young suggests: "It is this sovereign self of Europe which is today being deconstructed, showing the extent to which Europe's other has been a narcissistic self-image through which it has constituted itself while never allowing it to achieve a perfect fit."<sup>33</sup> Practices of colonialism, and forms of resistance to colonialism, are thus seen to be fluid, shifting and continuing well past the independence movements of many colonised regions. Human geographer Derek Gregory has traced these "imaginative geographies" from earlier colonial times through to the postcolonial world. Gregory identifies many areas of conceptualization, and action, which illustrate the resilience of older, colonial discourses in current times. Despite giving ample proof of the prevalence of these discourses, he nonetheless recognises, in line with the thought of Judith Butler, Robert Young and Homi Bhabha, that "every repertory performance of the colonial present carries within it the twin possibilities of either reaffirming and even radicalizing the hold of the colonial past on the present *or* undoing its enclosures and approaching closer to the horizon of the *postcolonial*."<sup>34</sup>

Foucauldian theory in this sense is often brought into analysis of the encounters between primarily Western media producers and their developing world 'subjects'. Edward Said's work includes perhaps two of the most influential efforts both in describing the history and mindset of colonialism as well as media perpetuation of colonial ideas.<sup>35</sup> Influenced by Foucault, Said argues that a complex set of representations was historically created, developing a structure for how 'the West' would understand and interact with 'the Orient'. This imaginary has largely determined Western involvement with the vast and diverse regions subsumed under

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<sup>33</sup> Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 19.

<sup>35</sup> See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 2003) and Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

the term 'Orient', 'Third World' or 'developing world' from colonial days to the present. Said's hope is that realisation of this situation will lead to efforts to develop different ways of understanding 'others', ways which do not postulate the existence of a single set of characteristics representing the 'other' or 'the Orient', where, in fact, he sees diverse and ungeneralisable groups.<sup>36</sup>

Difficulties for this position arise, according to Robert Young, when Said attempts to posit a critical place for intellectuals distanced from contemporary ideologies. In Young's opinion, this retention of the Western humanist conception of the critical individual prevents Said from exploring how 'the West's' creation of the 'Third World' or 'the Orient' reflects its own self doubts and internal contradictions rather than misrepresenting 'real' aspects of these places. Young, taking a more Derridean perspective, suggests that this position traps Said in having to say that there is a 'right' or a 'wrong' way to interpret these discursive categories, which Young believes should not be treated as fixed or stable.<sup>37</sup> Roxanne Doty seems to concur with Young in her work, *Imperial Encounters: the Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*. Doty argues that colonial discourses are structured, relational entities that are inherently open and contestable, although they often claim to be total. Using Foucault, Doty also suggests that shifting meanings can become stabilised or naturalised at various points due to the coalescence of certain power relations but are never absolutely fixed.<sup>38</sup> These perspectives would be in line with those of Gregory, mentioned above, and Judith Butler.

Other theorists engaging with issues of postcolonialism after the publication of Said's *Orientalism* have picked up on many of his ideas while trying to steer clear of his dilemmas. They argue that colonial stereotypes are not crude or 'incorrect' but rather complex, ambivalent and contradictory. Homi Bhabha has developed the idea of the 'colonial mimic': hybrid, fetishised identities practiced by colonised peoples that both

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<sup>36</sup> Young, *White Mythologies*, 126-127.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 129-140.

<sup>38</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: the Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.

adopt some features of the coloniser but which, also, precisely because of these adoptions, can become threatening to the coloniser. Young explains, when interpreting Bhabha's work, that "(c)olonial discourse does not merely represent the other, therefore, so much as simultaneously project and disavow its difference, a contradictory structure articulated according to fetishism's irreconcilable logic. Its mastery is always asserted, but is also always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete."<sup>39</sup>

Bhabha believes that this form of mimicry and hybridization can encourage internal 'native' resistance to colonial discourse and practices without the need for agency to come from subjects somehow existing outside colonial structures and mindsets. His approach, which emphasizes the value of psychoanalytic approaches to colonial study, is also taken up to an extent by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who has developed the idea, strongly influenced by the work of Derrida, that colonised peoples need to (re)tell their own stories of life and history to offer alternative perspectives to those of colonial elites. Spivak stresses, however, that these stories must be recognised as always incomplete and never unifiable in one colonial subject-position. According to Young, one of the most difficult things about Spivak's work is her idea that often 'the subaltern cannot speak'. Spivak believes that, in many cases, those individuals or groups whose experiences have been constantly rewritten and spoken only by colonising voices and in the terms of imperialism and patriarchy have simply not been able to be heard. Fortunately, this is primarily the case for historical situations, where the subjects are no longer alive to have the chance to tell their stories. Nevertheless, the options Spivak gives may disappoint many students of postcolonialism: "Rather than speak for a lost consciousness that cannot be recovered, a paternalistic activity at best, the critic can point to the place of women's [or a colonial subject's] disappearance as an *aporia*, a blind spot where understanding and knowledge is blocked."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Young, *White Mythologies*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

The relevance of these ideas for the work at hand is evident in their recognition that colonial bodies can be made silent and passive; however, these subjects can also contest and fight their circumstances in myriad ways, both discursively and physically. In the two case studies analysed for this work, the media and policymakers often spoke for, or kept silent, the voices of those whose countries were being 'intervened' in; these actions should be seen as part of continuing colonial practices, which this work aims to highlight and challenge. Despite Western media tendencies to represent Somali and Iraqi citizens in particular ways, often in line with long-time colonial stereotypes, Iraqis and Somalis will be seen to have actively contradicted such stereotypes or to have embraced and used certain Western perceptions to their own advantage. While this project has neither had the time nor the expertise to thoroughly investigate moments of Somali and Iraqi resistance, the imperative nonetheless exists to remember that 'the West' is not the only entity capable of sight, thought, analysis and assessment. The constructed 'us' is responded to by those it names 'others' in a plurality of ways, which deserve and require acknowledgement.

James R. Ryan's work on visual elements of colonial geographic practice provides ways of understanding how sets of Western cultural attitudes towards the rest of the world were historically developed and solidified.<sup>41</sup> Like Susan Sontag and many others, Ryan also subscribes to the idea that photographic imagery is ambiguous; a multiplicity of meanings may be generated by plural forms of knowledge brought to photos by their viewers. He investigates how cameras were immediately enlisted in projects of empire-building, whether they were being clumsily brought to record battle scenes, to preserve images of landscapes and topography or to allow the flora, fauna and peoples of the colonies to be classified and displayed in centres of colonial power. Photography was seen, like other Western sciences and technologies, both as proof of Western intellectual and cultural superiority to 'other' areas but also as means by which these places could be absorbed into Western knowledge and control. Used in

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<sup>41</sup> See James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1997) and James Ryan & Joan Schwartz eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

conjunction with telescopes and microscopes, photography also expanded human powers of observation and observable space. Inevitably, these new spaces were invested with meaning that was not simply based on obvious, visual 'facts' of the photographs, as many might have liked to believe, but were also tied to the fantasies and imaginings about other worlds beyond the immediate experiences of their creators and viewers.

In an important step for this work, Ryan points out that it was not just the 'dark' and 'unknown' regions of the expanding colonies that were exposed to the 'light' of cameras. The 'deviant', 'different' and 'marginal' populations of the Western world itself were also explored and compared. Thus, during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the East End of London became imaged and described as a place of darkness, danger, illness and the unknown using some of the same vocabularies and photographic techniques as were being used to document African jungles. The linking of diverse areas and peoples through recurrent use of specific verbal and visual strategies will be an important element of this project's empirical investigations, specifically in the case of Somalia. In this case, many similarities will be noted between frequent media representation of Somali men and boys as dangerous, drug-taking agents of violence in Somali society and the almost contemporaneous representation of African American motorist Rodney King and of those African Americans who reacted to the acquittal of the police officers charged with his severe beating. Again, as discussed above, 'others' rejections and (often ironic) acceptance of classifications imposed upon them are strategies during many engagements between constructed groups.

#### *Representing the 'developing' world: a look at 'Africa'*

These broad theoretical debates provide much material for thought in the study of 'Western' media representation of the 'non-Western' world. How are audiences to evaluate what they see and read of these diverse areas? While it may be theoretically straightforward to accept that there can be no single, 'true' understanding of diverse,

'non-Western' 'others', let alone one that is not contaminated by the self-understandings of media producers and observing selves, pervasive media images and text representing non-Western locations have proved to have remarkably persistent and consistent qualities. The media brings areas of the developing world to the Western viewer in both entertainment and information formats. The content of these stories is often highly reliant on 'colonised' sources of information; for example, the use of primarily Western correspondents or policymakers who are non-resident (and often not even present) in a certain area as the voices of authority and knowledge about a particular history or issue. The use of developing world elites who may be viewed as illegitimate or far removed from a group of people or a situation in their state or region can also lead to a very specific version of events being told at the expense of others. The supposedly objective or 'expert' text or voice, often accompanied by 'transparent', 'self-explanatory' images are, however, routinely constructed and presented as if they represent the only 'rational', 'logical' way to view a certain situation. The colonial basis for Western knowledge about much of the developing world, as well as other factors within the modern system of mass media production, consistently interact to hone a repetitive stereotype and to limit public exposure to other interpretations.

African countries certainly fall within Said's and other postcolonial theorists' expansive understanding of the constructed 'Oriental' category and are frequently portrayed within a narrow set of parameters, largely influenced by the colonial past. As contributors to Beverly G. Hawk's edited work, *Africa's Media Image* point out, most Western-educated media correspondents covering Africa have been taught, either directly or indirectly, that Western states, not Africans themselves, were the moving force in African history.<sup>42</sup> African states are frequently viewed as still in the 'infancy' stages of a linear progression towards Western standards of governance, technological development and culture. As Doty points out, metaphors are often used whereby 'developing' countries become growing children for whom the 'First World' knows

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<sup>42</sup> See Beverly Hawk, ed., *Africa's Media Image* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 4.

best.<sup>43</sup> Often, these countries appear in Western media as mired in deficiencies and conflicts, which are seen as motivated by 'tribalism' and brutishness which are not comparable to Western forms of violence. The common inability of Westerners to speak many African languages heightens their difficulty in gaining knowledge of the particular history and context of a situation from local people. Instead, journalists tend to rely heavily on official government sources of information, either those of the African state itself or those of familiar Western, 'home' governments.

A huge diversity of countries and societies are routinely lumped together, spoken of generally as 'Africa', and linked with the abovementioned stereotypes. The word 'Africa' now frequently calls up images for Westerners of unchanging, primitive locations that hit the headlines only briefly as disaster areas, places that are spectacular or disturbing particularly because of the immense chasm assumed between existence there and life in the West. African states and politics, along with other areas of the 'developing' world, are routinely under-covered by Western news sources because of the presumption that few interesting, relatable or profitable stories emerge from them. The nature of involvement, or often the lack of involvement, by Western governments in this region confirms for the media that this part of the globe is not politically or economically influential or important.

Western reporters who have covered areas of Africa express a variety of opinions, with many deeply committed to getting the 'local' perspective for their stories and some explicitly eager about using their work to draw Western attention and aid to troubled areas of the continent. This 'crusading' approach has its own issues in terms of the discursive structures and imagery on which it tends to rely. Many journalists mentioned in the Hawk-edited work, however, speak of the danger and difficulty of fairly reporting African events due to intense censorship from local government bodies, cultural and linguistic divisions, and a lack of resources from their own media employers. One correspondent, contributing to Hawk's work, explains that he gave up covering the continent because he was bored with its lack of progress, the ignorance of

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<sup>43</sup> Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, 134.

African leaders and the difficulty of travelling to report within the continent.<sup>44</sup> Even Dan Eldon, a young photojournalist who was deeply committed to covering the Somali conflict, described himself as 'shell-shocked' and needing leave from Somalia after spending just under a month there. Many other journalists stayed in the country for less than that amount of time.<sup>45</sup> When examples of media coverage in both Somalia and Iraq are given, the issues and assumptions outlined above from the Hawk edition will be provided with more empirical support.

Jonathan Benthall's work investigates the relationship between relief agencies and the media in an attempt to think about how interaction between these two groups may affect coverage of particular issues and regions. This work is of relevance particularly to the case of Somalia, where aid agencies in some cases had greater local knowledge and experience of the country and its dynamics than intervening governments and the United Nations. Western media coverage often portrayed these organisations and their workers as Somalia's 'heroes', while the rest of the world was deemed to be slow and ineffective in its involvement. Efforts by Somalis themselves to survive and facilitate peacemaking were often overlooked when this particular representation of aid workers was used by media. In the case of Fallujah, the work of aid agencies is not widely reported in many news sources. The presence of such agencies in Fallujah was likely reduced due to the physical dangers of working in the city while it was under siege. Agency work that was able to continue, however, often may have been underrepresented because aid agencies, due to the nature of their work, frequently highlighted the civilian costs of the battle, an aspect of Fallujah's story which many media sources seemed unable or unwilling to tell.

Benthall's research stresses the importance of the media for 'creating' disasters by recognising them and giving them acknowledgement outside of the areas where they occur. While this publicity can often benefit aid agencies in the publicised region, a harmonious relationship between a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and the

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<sup>44</sup> See Stanley Meisler, "Committed in Africa: Reflections of a Correspondent", in *Africa's Media Image*, 36

<sup>45</sup> For more on Dan Eldon's story, see Jennifer New, *Dan Eldon: the Art of Life* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001).



media can become conflictual if the NGO feels the story of its work is being told incorrectly or in an otherwise damaging fashion for their efforts. Alternately, media organisations can occasionally feel pressured by certain groups of agencies to cover specific events for which they are trying to fundraise.<sup>46</sup> Benthall believes that most aid agencies alternate between playing on guilt and compassion, despite their efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to move away from fundraising appeals based on making people in developing countries into stereotypes of need, shock-value and helplessness. He suggests that the media are culpable in this continuation, as they are often socialised into understanding the developing world in a very narrow and particular way.

Stanley Cohen agrees with Benthall in this particular assessment of why certain stereotypical images prevail despite at least rhetorical efforts at change. Cohen suggests that famine stories are popular with the media because they are superficially not as ambiguous as issues involving human rights or political movements. Famine is not an easy issue for governments to refuse to act upon; it can also appear to have an easy solution- food aid. Because of its widely-televised and described history in certain areas, particularly in Africa, media, viewers and governments already have rehearsed narratives and stock imagery to fall back on when famines occur. This is especially obvious with regards to African famines after the well-known Ethiopian event of 1984-85. Women and children are almost exclusively shown as victims, while men are often less visible or are depicted as involved in violent acts which created or support the famine. Cohen believes this pattern is followed because, to create the greatest amount of audience sympathy, the victims of famine must be seen as totally blameless for the circumstances surrounding their plight. Thus, the young are commonly shown as suffering for the actions of their elders and in patriarchal societies women are sometimes depicted, usually incorrectly, as being unable to improve the well-being of their families. Aid workers are also a necessary link in the story for Cohen, as he suggests that they bring an important, relatable Western face into the narrative for audiences who want to see their own connection, however vague, to a particular

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, Relief & the Media* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1995), 49.

event.<sup>47</sup> Again, with reference to the case of Somalia, these themes will be visible and important to the ways in which that country's situation was understood.

Tim Allen and Jean Seaton are specifically interested in another aspect of conflict reporting besides famine, the 'ethnic' element perceived in many of these events. In the second chapter of their edited work, Seaton argues that the media is crucial in presenting audiences with their first, influential definition of the social groups taking part in conflicts. She believes that the concept of primordial ethnicities often ends up depoliticising conflicts and may be explained by the media's lack of interest and effort in explaining conflicts' political calculations.<sup>48</sup> In short, it is easier to tell a story about a simple good/bad binary and Seaton argues that the media often deliberately do not publish stories that might disturb these morally simple frames. David Keen, a contributor to the Allen and Seaton work, concurs with Seaton and adds that a commonly-held idea has developed in the West that 'pointless' 'ethnic' wars happen elsewhere and require Western involvement to end them. Keen argues, instead, that supposed 'ethnic' conflict is often equally a case of fights over class privileges and an unequal division of resources. He also concurs with Cohen, and other researchers whose work will be explored later in this chapter, that media are often focused on stories that provide an exciting or compelling visual element, with those which cannot provide this option being overlooked. The risk of media personnel becoming overly dependent on Western 'experts' in the military, aid agencies and academia is also acknowledged. Due to various racialized, colonial stereotypes, 'experts' often appear as the culturally more acceptable and reliable sources of information.<sup>49</sup> Evidence from media coverage of both Somalia and Fallujah will illustrate the extent to which media have followed these predicted paths, both with regards to coverage of famine and conflict situations.

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<sup>47</sup> See Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities & Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 174-176.

<sup>48</sup> Tim Allen & Jean Seaton eds., *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting & Representations of Ethnic Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 43-50.

<sup>49</sup> David Keen, "Chapter 4", in Allen & Seaton eds., *The Media of Conflict*, 81- 83 & 96-97.

### *Deconstructing self/other binaries*

Such colonised interpretations, built on unstable, binary distinctions between developed/undeveloped, civilised/uncivilised and valuable/unimportant are an excellent point at which to move into a consideration of the theoretical relevance of Jacques Derrida's work, both for postcolonial and media studies. Derrida is hesitant to allow his 'deconstructive' approach to studying texts to be spoken of as a method. He balks at the suggestion that generalities might be pulled from a vast variety of case studies, arguing that only a very relative generality can strive to adjust itself to each singular case.<sup>50</sup> Derrida's belief that texts are unable to close or complete themselves, however, leaves space for a re-evaluation of supposedly clear boundaries and divisions which are interpreted within texts, images, and broader societal discourses. The importance of his work for debates surrounding the development of postcolonial theory have been hinted at above and his insights also pertain to ideas which are formed and spread by modern mass media and its coverage of the developing world. A deconstructive approach will be extremely useful for this work's attempt to identify and question the predominant ways in which Western interventions in both Somalia and Iraq were conceptualised in British and American mainstream media. As Derrida suggests, what is left out of these particular understandings may be just as important as what is described. Deconstruction for Derrida involves exposing the inevitable failure of supposed dialectical oppositions to be held apart. He sees each distinction as unavoidably contaminated by and dependent upon its presumed opposite.<sup>51</sup> Western approaches to understanding 'other' places and people, like Somalia and Iraq, are thus always seen to be dependent upon the ways in which those in 'the West', an often-unstable term in itself, interpret and define themselves.

What remains undeconstructible for Derrida is also what gives deconstruction its justification as an approach for this work; that is 'justice', defined as the affirmative

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<sup>50</sup> See Elizabeth Rottenberg ed., *Negotiations: Interventions & Interviews 1971-2001 Jacques Derrida* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 192.

<sup>51</sup> Edith Wyschogrod, "Derrida, Levinas & Violence" in *Derrida & Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman, (New York: Routledge, 1989).

experience of the coming of the 'other' as 'other'.<sup>52</sup> Derrida's conception of ethics borrows heavily from that of Emmanuel Levinas, who radically criticised and transformed traditional Western ethical philosophy. Levinas argued that ethical consciousness is not a set of values to be adhered to but rather the experience of an exterior being, or Other, who exceeds any idea of the 'other' or 'difference' in the self, forcing the self to justify and to question its own existence. His ethical philosophy moves away from traditional concepts based on reducing what is 'other' to the 'same' or to 'one'.<sup>53</sup> Derrida picks up on this infinite sense of tension in his own work on blindness and vision, as he explores the ethical character of human capacity for sight. "He seems to recognize, at least implicitly, that there is a potential in this capacity not only for aggression, but also for sympathy and compassion: the eyes can be touched and moved, moved even to tears, by what they see, what they are given to see."<sup>54</sup>

Derrida follows this example to a large extent when discussing the difficulty of the truly ethical decision. He conceives of justice as the undecidable limit of the possible while recognising that the law and all decision-making processes must cut and divide in certain ways. There is always a moment of 'madness' in any ethical decision because the open-ended nature of democratic justice allows the possibility that cruel or perverse decisions may be made as well as 'good' ones. Preserving a sense of justice becomes tied to the action (or inaction) involved in leaving open space for a multiplicity of outcomes and potentials.<sup>55</sup> This project will hopefully contribute in a small way to this preservation by helping to expose the limits of media representation of the Somalia intervention and, in less depth, coverage of the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004. I aim to illustrate the limits of coverage discourses in order to open a space in which new or

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<sup>52</sup> Rottenberg, *Negotiations: Interventions & Interviews 1971-2002*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> For more on Levinas' and Derrida's understandings of ethics see Sean Hand ed., *The Levinas Reader* (Cambridge, US: B. Blackwell, 1989) and Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Levin, *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy*, 430.

<sup>55</sup> For more on Derrida's engagement with Levinas and ethical decision-making, see Jacques Derrida, "The Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundations of Authority'", in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Cornell, Rosenfeld and Carlson (London: Routledge, 1994) and Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

previously-unheard narratives and imagery of Somalia and Iraq can be presented and debated.

Derrida has not commented extensively on the current situation of modern mass media except in his recent, co-authored work with Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*.<sup>56</sup> For Derrida, unsurprisingly, the experience of modern forms of communication can be paradoxical in the impulses it creates within the individual:

Take the example of television. It constantly introduces the elsewhere and the global into the home. Thus I am more isolated, more privatized than ever, with the constant intrusion, desired by me, into my home, of the other, the stranger, the distant, the other tongue. I desire this intrusion and, at the same time, I shut myself in with this stranger; I want to isolate myself with him without him; I want to be at home. The more powerful and violent the technological expropriation, the delocalization, the more powerful, naturally, the recourse to the at-home, the return toward home.<sup>57</sup>

It is Derrida's hope that the spread of media technologies, which bring diverse areas of the world into various peoples' knowledge and vision, may negotiate and mediate with allegedly opposing impulses towards national singularity or localness. This will not be an easy negotiation since, as described above in paradoxical form, Derrida sees the very possibility of hospitality and openness as a condition based on a localness that always risks the possibility "of closedness, of selfish and impoverishing and even lethal isolation".<sup>58</sup> Derrida's position here is most important in terms of its broader, ethical influence for this project, along with his techniques for approaching language and deconstructing texts by highlighting tensions between 'self/other' binaries. He does not consider in *Echographies of Television* how the content, style and presentation of news imagery may affect its reception by various audiences. Derrida's work at this point is complemented by the theoretical work of Foucault and postcolonial writers, who are concerned with articulating the specific material

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<sup>56</sup> Jacques Derrida & Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 81.

mechanisms and discursive strategies which allow for processes of closure and opening towards 'others' to occur.

At a broader level, Derrida's paradox provides an excellent angle for exploring UN, but most particularly US, involvement in the Somalia intervention. It was, rhetorically at least, an ethic of openness and concern for wider humanity which brought these entities into Somalia with aid and support for the Somali people. Conversely, the reaction of the US after the 'Black Hawk down' mission was one of closing down, abandonment of the region, and discussion of a foreign policy driven more by national interest than humanitarianism. Derrida's suggestion of the risk of isolationist closure seems to have occurred here, leading to the question of upon what the initial moment of openness was based. This work will use a Derridean-inspired analytical strategy to deconstruct media discourses and imagery throughout the Somalia intervention in order to investigate this change in approach towards Somali 'others'. The case of Fallujah provides a more recent example for exploration and comparison with Somalia.

### **Interpreting the Image/Photograph**

A range of theoretical literature which explores relationships between knowledge, power and communication media has been surveyed, as well as the linkages between this body of work and research on representations of colonised people and places. Susan Sontag's work provides a closer look at the experiences of photographic image creation and viewing, as well as addressing the content of these images. Her approach, along with those of several other theorists discussed in this section, provides a valuable complement to the theories of social discourses outlined by the academics mentioned above. The image-based economy has grown rapidly in the last twenty-five years, especially with the recent introduction of affordable digital technology. Many questions have arisen as to how these new technologies will be used by consumers and further developed by producers. Imagery has been and is currently enlisted for a huge range of purposes including: producing desire, consumption,

entertainment and education. The theorists reviewed in this section also deal specifically with issues surrounding public viewing of news imagery of conflict, violence and suffering. Such imagery is predominant in both case studies undertaken by this work; its theoretical analysis is therefore crucial.

Sontag's earlier writing has remained relevant, particularly her often-cited 1977 book *On Photography*. It has provided a starting point for much of the more recent study conducted into the place and affects of visual news imagery in modern Western societies. A line from her opening essay in this work provides an excellent entry point into Sontag's broad areas of interest: "In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing."<sup>59</sup> This linking of visual study with an ethics of approach is common across the range of theorists in this section who deal with imagery of conflict and disaster. Even though the term 'discourse' is not used explicitly across this entire range of authors, their understanding of how images function in societies, and particularly in Western media, largely fit within broader conceptions of discourse. Images are understood and debated socially, through language, and thus are often crucial parts of social discourses, which can be comprised of images, text, speech and intersubjective relations. Meanings associated with images, which can be apparently stable or in flux, are seen to have social and material impacts.

In *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities & Suffering*, Stanley Cohen discusses the paradox of television bringing important events to the knowledge of Western audiences but simultaneously presenting them in ways that transform viewers into cultural tourists or voyeurs of atrocity.<sup>60</sup> Ron Burnett broadly agrees with Sontag's concept of images as helping to 'frame' individuals' understanding of a subject. He makes frequent use of this particular term, calling photographs a means by which vision is framed and mediated; photographs are described as 'windows' for the activity

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<sup>59</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities & Suffering*, 169.

of seeing. Although such windows may appear to provide 'transparent' views, Burnett suggests that images can also make viewers aware of the boundaries between perceiver and perceived, allowing a retreat or withdrawal of the viewer from the viewed. For Burnett, however, it is possible for these metaphorical windows to be smashed, permitting mediated experiences to touch viewers in significant, ethically-motivated ways.<sup>61</sup>

Burnett's approach is similar to that of Roland Barthes. Barthes differentiates between the *studium*, elements in a photograph which the viewer connects with via shared socio-cultural and political references, and the *punctum*, an aspect or detail of a photograph which "pricks" an individual viewer in a particular way. According to Barthes, the *punctum* is usually not a deliberate element of the photograph but rather something supplemental and unplanned, different for each viewer.<sup>62</sup> Burnett's window analogy is useful for this work, as it functions in a similar way to the concept of 'discourse'. Within this project, the development of particular discourses for understanding images and events are critical for developing a context for social comprehension. Discourses inevitably also function, however, as ways in which particular interpretations are solidified, often at the expense of others, which do not fit within the view from a particular 'window'. Nevertheless, the possibility for questioning and challenging prevailing discourses remains, as suggested by Barthes. The development of new social references is continual, and *punctum* experiences express an enduring aspect of individuality involved in experiencing images.

While in a sense photography's dilemmas and relations with society can be understood in similar ways to those of traditional arts such as painting, there is little doubt that, with its creation and development in the age of mass production, photography also offers something quite different. As Sontag asserts in her later work on this topic, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, photographic images are both a transcription

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<sup>61</sup> Ron Burnett, *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media & the Imaginary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 4-6.

<sup>62</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage, 2000), 25-55.



of reality and yet are also an interpretation of that reality.<sup>63</sup> Different popular modes of interpreting photos have developed throughout photography's history. Take, for example, instances in which a less polished or perfected picture is thought to be somehow more 'authentic' and less manipulated than one which has clearly been posed or arranged. These sorts of assumptions are made by viewers without knowing the photographer's, and likely also the photo editor's, thought processes and the choices both these image producers routinely make about how to crop a photo, where to publish it, etc. Sontag points out the interesting way in which Westerners are often disappointed by finding out that a photograph has been 'staged' or 'artificially arranged'. Why does this disturb us? Sontag suggests that it is because we want photographers to be voyeurs for us into the horrors and joys of others' lives. We want confirmation that certain widely-recognised emotions, individuals and situations are 'real' parts of our collective history.<sup>64</sup> For Burnett, the debate over what is 'real' in a photo recognises that there is always continual social work involved in the recovery and maintenance of meaning.

For Luc Boltanski, one of news photography's ethical dilemmas is that Western cultural norms tend to view the spectator or photographer's lack of involvement and/or detachment from the scene and/or subjects that they 'capture' as a guarantee of objectivity. A spectator to suffering or conflict may feel the need to describe scenes 'objectively' yet be unable to do this when discussing the suffering of others. According to Boltanski, witnesses often deal with this situation by describing suffering *and* their own reaction to it. A difference between the observing and the acting self is thus created. This distancing can be ironic or self-critical but often results in viewers learning more about the spectator's own feelings and reactions than the feelings of those suffering, usually the main subjects of the images created.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2003), 26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>65</sup> Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media & Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 43-45.

Study of the choices involved in the taking, developing and interpreting of a photograph brings us back to Sontag's ethical exploration of how a camera, be it a still camera or a video camera, becomes a mediator for encounters with strange and different situations and people.<sup>66</sup> Here there again appears to be a paradoxical situation in that the act of taking a photograph can be seen both as an act of intervention or violation and as an act of non-intervention. For example, a photojournalist looking for dramatic footage in Somalia might intervene in the lives of Somali women in a refugee camp while attempting to take photos of their emaciated children; the process of taking such a photo, however, means that they choose, at least temporarily, not to assist these subjects.

The necessary actions of stopping, considering, framing and taking a photo mean that the photographer allows an act to continue so that the photo may be taken. The picture-taker therefore becomes somewhat complicit in the act taking place. An example of this particular situation occurred when South African photojournalist Kevin Carter took a picture of an emaciated Sudanese toddler, collapsed on the ground with a vulture standing nearby. The photograph won Carter a Pulitzer Prize and was widely acclaimed throughout the photographic community; it was also, however, a source of much interest and some outrage to the viewing public. In response to a flood of reader criticism and concern, *The New York Times*, which published the image on March 26, 1993, subsequently had to print an editorial piece noting that the young female subject had made it to a feeding station.

The photograph was first used to illustrate an article describing the brutal civil war in Sudan, which was creating large numbers of internally-displaced, starving people. Its initial caption did not provide specific information about the fate of the child shown. While the image was hailed by some journalists and editors as an 'iconic' photograph of suffering and starvation, a substantial segment of the viewing public were more interested in the specifics of the photo rather than its larger representational possibilities. They wanted to know what, if anything, Carter had done to assist the

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<sup>66</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*, 10-11.

child. For Carter, who was by all accounts traumatized by much of his conflict experience and who later took his own life, these questions illustrated the failure of viewers to grasp the broader significance of the situation represented by his image: "A friend of his [Carter's] reported that when he asked Carter 'what did you do with the baby?' Carter 'looked at me in bewilderment and said, 'Nothing, there were thousands of them.'"<sup>67</sup> In this case, aspects of Carter's image prompted some audience members to challenge his role as 'objective', 'uninvolved' photographer/witness and asserted his imperative to act as an ethical, fellow human.

In any of the abovementioned examples, the involvement of a camera can and will change the engagement between the potential image-maker and his/her potential subjects. It will also create varying perceptions of 'distance' in the three point interaction between photographer, photographic subject and the image's audience. Importantly, as Boltanski points out, there is a risk of photographers and viewers falling into an 'aesthetic mode', where what the spectator/photographer and the viewer have to say about the unfortunate subject of suffering is intended not for dialogue with that sufferer but instead for iconographic, artistic, fundraising or pity-inducing purposes.<sup>68</sup> One must also point out, following the Carter example, that the opposite possibility also exists. An audience may identify with one particular victim, potentially at the expense of failing to recognise a less-visible toll, such as that which the long-running civil war had had on thousands of other, unphotographed Sudanese citizens. Giving consideration to the multiple ways of engaging with 'famine' photography is important for this project, since the presentation of famine images from Somalia only months before the Carter picture was taken prompted moral justifications by US policymakers and the media for intervening in the 'failed' state. Images of civilian victims of conflict have also played an important role in the moral evaluation of initial and continuing US involvement in Somalia and Iraq.

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<sup>67</sup> David D. Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 26. This book contains a more detailed discussion of the Carter Sudan image.

<sup>68</sup> Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media & Politics*, 132.

The Carter example exposes both the power and also the limits of a photograph in ways that relate again to Sontag's foundational questions. Along with photographic theorists such as John Tagg and Victor Burgin, Sontag speaks of the importance of the caption and the identification of images.<sup>69</sup> All three of these theorists point out the ease with which a caption can drastically change the meaning of an image, potentially aiding its tendency to ambiguity or bringing the image very much 'home' to the viewer. Tagg and Burgin both cite Walter Benjamin on the importance of captions for helping to preserve the 'use value' of a photograph, that is the places and context in which it is seen, and for helping to avoid the aestheticization of an image, especially those involving violence or the suffering of others.<sup>70</sup> Sontag agrees with Tagg and Burgin on this point. She suggests that photos of misery cannot have meaning or affect unless there is an appropriate context, moral space or ideology which accompanies or predates the images: "The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is the surface. Now think- or rather feel, intuit- what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.' Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation and fantasy."<sup>71</sup>

What each of these commentators suggests is that there is always an element of risk to the photograph, not unlike the way Derrida suggests that there is always a risk in democracy and justice. Photos can be captured and used for a multiplicity of different purposes; the decision on how to use them must thus take place in the realm of ethics, rather than simply being determined by criteria of 'truthfulness'. To re-emphasize, this understanding of images is complementary for viewing them as a crucial part of many societal discourses. Sontag, Boltanski, Cohen and Burnett also view ethical sentiments triggered by images and narratives of suffering as unstable; they must be acted upon or else will eventually wither. Sontag argues that one of the most important reactions to images of suffering is not to feel sympathy, which implies

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<sup>69</sup> Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 10.

<sup>70</sup> See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*, 23.

disconnectedness and impotence in the face of events, but to instead be provoked into questioning how the pain of 'others' may be linked to our own perceptions of our security, or insecurity, in 'the West'.<sup>72</sup> Ian Walker writes in his contribution to *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture* that he believes an important reaction to viewing images is that we are often left with an uncomfortable silence between what we sense was experienced 'there' and 'our' experience 'here', as an observer.<sup>73</sup> John Berger also emphasizes non-rational responses to photos. He believes there can be no firm division made between sight and imagination; images are both cognitive and metaphoric.<sup>74</sup>

Such insights can be linked to the methodological approach of this work, meshing well with a deconstructive discourse analysis. Exposing and interrogating the discourses within which the Somalia and Fallujah interventions were placed, often supported by particular types of imagery, can help to expose the integration of these discourses with power relations that render certain voices, and not others, silent. They encourage particular associations, while rendering others illegitimate, wrong, deviant etc. As Sontag suggests, audiences' recognition of how their own actions 'at home' are implicated in the survival of seemingly-distant 'others' could help to challenge often-persistent dichotomies between the situation of the viewer/reader/listener and that of the often-distant observed.

All of the abovementioned commentators engage to a certain extent with previously discussed theorists of modern media, whose work overlaps in places with their own. Sontag is critical of theorists such as Baudrillard and Debord. For her, their assertion that reality has been replaced by simulations and images results in the universalisation of the experiences of a small, privileged group of Westerners who have the luxury of becoming spectators to other peoples' pain while ignoring those who refuse to view television images in such a cynical way. Cohen's reading is similar; while he has some praise for Baudrillard's work, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, he

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<sup>72</sup>See Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 101-103.

<sup>73</sup> Ian Walker, "Desert Stories or Faith in Facts?", in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, ed. Martin Lister, 244 (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Lister, *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, 40.

believes that it is a relativistic work, along with that of other authors he labels 'postmodernist', which curtails any ability these authors might have to judge events ethically. For Cohen there is still a 'real' vantage point from which to prove the 'truth' of represented events.<sup>75</sup>

Boltanski's critique of Baudrillard is more subtle; he is primarily worried that too much focus on the media form of imagery itself will allow people to bracket off or forget the content of images. Recognising the view of some that charity is becoming a mediatised, entertainment industry, he stresses the importance of public speech and discussion for raising awareness and aid for suffering, rather than simple recourse to pity-motivated imagery.<sup>76</sup> Burnett has the most detailed comment on Baudrillard. Like Sontag, he feels that Baudrillard is overly pessimistic about the world of images, seeing it as overwhelmingly violent, consumption-oriented and narcissistic for viewing subjects. According to Burnett, Baudrillard reifies the image into a negative ideological construct and ends up precluding the possibilities of images being multifaceted, ambiguous and a potentially positive force for change and creativity. This being said, Burnett suggests that Baudrillard has often been misread as a prophet hailing the arrival of a postmodern world with no reality but only images. He sees Baudrillard as profoundly sceptical of current trends and conscious of the political and social impacts of the disappearance of certain bodies and representations in a Western world which is otherwise bombarded with images.<sup>77</sup>

It is not the contention of this work that one should take either a solely negative or positive stance regarding 'the West's' current situation of learning about and viewing disaster and conflict in 'other' places primarily through mediated options such as newspapers, television and the Internet. In his defence from some of these critics, it seems doubtful that Baudrillard intends to privilege 'the West' in this way. If anything, Baudrillard appears overly-eager to glorify "primitive", non-Western cultures, which he believes still understand and accept the importance of "authentic" dialogue and

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<sup>75</sup> Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities & Suffering*, 280.

<sup>76</sup> Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media & Politics*, 177-182.

<sup>77</sup> Burnett, *Cultures of Vision: Images, Media & the Imaginary*, 210-213 & 319-332.

“symbolic exchange”. There can be little excuse for belittling all the accounts of journalists, aid workers and other individuals who have risked their own safety for firsthand reporting of war zones and conflict. The motivations and actions of these groups within conflict areas and in the ‘developing world’ as a whole, however, should remain open to questioning and scrutiny. These individuals are not necessarily vulgar voyeurs of others’ pain, but their actions and presence are also never completely benign, ‘objective’ or ‘uninvolved’. In the same sense, the subjects of their study, photographs and work resist simple binary categories of good or evil. Baudrillard’s work can be used productively without necessarily succumbing to the obvious traces of irony and cynicism, particularly in his later work. The work of Sontag and others discussed in this section can similarly be brought into this project’s engagement with various images of ‘other’ people and places, reminding readers and the author of the ambiguous nature of photographs, which allows them to be used as crucial elements in a multiplicity of discourses, and the necessity of an ethically-aware approach to their interpretation and use.

### **Representing War & Death**

In recent years an increasing number of works have been published on the media’s roles in covering conflicts and humanitarian disasters. As in other areas of media and communications studies, focus has varied between those who have primarily investigated the dialogue and images associated with conflict reporting and those who have explored its political-economy. While few works have been as provocative in their language and claims as Baudrillard’s *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, many similar themes have emerged and have been explored using varying degrees of theoretical and empirical study. Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait prompted an American-dominated but UN-sanctioned response in the first months of 1991. This has been a popular case study, as many commentators suggest that media coverage of this war represented a new stage in terms of war technology, media technology and journalistic approaches to conflict coverage. Baudrillard’s *The Gulf War*

*Did Not Take Place* is composed of three essays written before, during and after the hostilities, all of which appeared in the French newspaper, *Liberation*. One of the key points illustrated is the extent to which control of the production and circulation of conflict images is now seen by many governments as of equal importance to the ability to control and direct ever more sophisticated military technology to fight wars. These new developments have also been extensively investigated by James Der Derian, who labels them as characteristics of 'virtuous war' or 'infowar':

Broadly conceived, 'infowar' is as old as Sun Tzu's 'strategic factors' and as new as the armed forces' Joint Vision 2010 'full-spectrum dominance'. However, the new infowar is significantly different from past forms in the proliferation of networked computing and the use of high-resolution video...The speed of interconnectivity that the computer enables has, more than any other innovation in warfare from the stirrup to gunpowder to radar to nukes, shifted the battlefield away from the geopolitical to the electromagnetic. Less obviously, the power of cyberwar comes from its ability to reproduce as well as to deconstruct reality with a real-time verisimilitude that will make future war more a contest of signs than of soldiers.<sup>78</sup>

While the media have been historically-important propaganda tools in many earlier wars, Baudrillard and Der Derian are in agreement that there is little doubt about the increasing interconnection of the media and the military in the early 1990s: "The media promote the war, the war promotes the media, and advertising competes with the war."<sup>79</sup> This new level of connectedness, prompted largely by the media's increased technological abilities to broadcast 'live' and twenty-four hours a day from the 'front' in the Persian Gulf, is viewed in a negative and also an ironic light by Baudrillard. His work illustrates ways in which the huge output of media coverage during the Gulf War failed, like the war itself, to have any 'real' meaning for viewing publics; both coverage and warfare were experienced primarily through hyper-real, simulated images:

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<sup>78</sup> James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2001), 118.

<sup>79</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 31.



The war, along with the fake and presumptive warriors, generals, experts and television presenters we see speculating about it all through the day, watches itself in a mirror: am I pretty enough, am I operational enough, am I spectacular enough, am I sophisticated enough to make an entry onto the historical stage? Of course, this anxious interrogation increases the uncertainty with respect to its possible irruption. And this uncertainty invades our screens like a real oil slick, in the image of that blind sea bird stranded on a beach in the Gulf, which will remain the symbol-image of what we all are in front of our screens, in front of that sticky and unintelligible event.<sup>80</sup>

Baudrillard exposes the emptiness, barring entertainment value, of the hours of information provided by 'experts' about actions in the Gulf. This 'information' in fact provides little or no context for understanding the 'events', which Baudrillard believes are more about shows of force than substantive issues in any case. Importantly, this war was represented as 'bloodless' by many American news sources, particularly television. For the Americans, there was indeed a minimal loss of life; yet the massive casualty numbers and destruction of infrastructure needed for life on the Iraqi side of this conflict went largely unimaged and unmentioned. Der Derian pursues this theme in more depth; he points out that a key aspect of virtuous war is its ability to threaten from a distance, with little risk of one or both warring parties sustaining either damage or casualties. "On the surface, virtuous war cleans up the political discourse as well as the battlefield. Fought in the same manner as they are represented, by real-time surveillance and TV 'live-feeds', virtuous wars promote a vision of bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic wars."<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, the Gulf War is represented in Baudrillard's work as a "dead" or "non-war", in which asymmetric power prevents any exchange of violence or diplomacy, or much human contact at all, between the warring parties. According to Baudrillard, the media collaborate with the military in developing this new form of conflict, where the West acts in defense of 'values' without any willingness to engage

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<sup>80</sup> Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 31-32.

<sup>81</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, xv.

with the beliefs of the 'enemy' or even to treat them as subjects worthy of representation:

For the Americans, the enemy does not exist as such. *Nothing personal.* Your war is of no interest to me, your resistance is of no interest to me. I will destroy you when I am ready. Refusal to bargain...The Americans understand nothing in this whole psychodrama of bargaining, they are had every time until, with the wounded pride of the Westerner, they stiffen and impose their conditions...For them, the time of exchange does not exist...For the Americans, bargaining is cheap whereas for others it is a matter of honour, (mutual) personal recognition, linguistic strategy (language exists, it must be honoured) and respect for time (altercation demands a rhythm, it is the price of there being an Other). The Americans have no account of these primitive subtleties. They have much to learn about symbolic exchange.<sup>82</sup>

Baudrillard's work is often deliberately hyperbolic and provocative, but several important points for this work emerge from it. For the majority of Western audiences, surface-level images and words on the flat planes of screens or newspaper pages are their only forms of engagement with international conflicts and interventions. New technology allows some means of access to these sites, in the form of simulacra, but cannot provide other forms of connection, which are often forgotten about or denied. Der Derian is explicit about this loss, that of the 'human' element previously inescapable in conflict. He fears that the increasing speed of technologies in the media-military network may lead to "quick military fixes" replacing the "deliberative process of diplomacy".<sup>83</sup> In the cases of both Somalia and Iraq, the use of asymmetric warfare to ensure a minimal loss of American lives helped to encourage a type of warfare, and the production of media coverage, from which civilian casualties on the 'other' side were largely absent, much as Baudrillard and Der Derian outline in the case of the 1991 Gulf War. When situations with the population of the state being intervened upon became difficult, in both cases a military fix was undertaken, as the above authors

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<sup>82</sup> Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 54-55.

<sup>83</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, 147.

suggest, at the expense of more measured and diplomatic options. When the 'other' sides in conflict were able to become powerful image generators, as in the cases of 'Black Hawk down' and the contractor killings, control of images was momentarily lost by Western policymakers. At these points, the affects of images of 'our' dead were pronounced in a Western media environment where these sorts of visuals were rare. It will be important for future work in this area to consider the ways in which new technologies of polling and surveying media audiences may also fuel policy shifts towards responses driven by the necessity for speed over measured consideration, following perceived public angst about particular images.

### *The political economy of media production and representation*

Theorists such as Sontag, Boltanski, Cohen and Burnett from the previous section all assume the existence of 'compassion fatigue' as a potential for media audiences bombarded by images of suffering. The mostly 'old-fashioned' types of violence and disaster discussed by these authors are represented in many areas as 'primordial', incomprehensible and unstoppable. Commentators like Baudrillard and Der Derian are more focused on the other end of the violence spectrum; the state of affairs in their examples is viewed more as a 'seduction' of audiences through the use of simulacra and the pursuit of high-tech, bloodless wars. Susan Moeller's work provides valuable insights at this juncture; she explores the much-discussed but under-theorized concept of 'compassion fatigue', mentioning the significance of the site of audiences as well as the content and presentation style of media coverage. Despite Moeller's statements about the importance of audience analysis, however, her empirical work maintains a focus on the content and political-economic situation of media production. Compassion fatigue is a concept that remains largely undeveloped through direct study and engagement with audiences. Research in this area would benefit from increased engagement with audience reception of media images and narratives.

According to Moeller, compassion fatigue acts as an *a priori* restraint on media, with some stories never being told due to an assumed lack of public appeal. She also

suggested that compassion fatigue can abet American, and more generally Western, self-interest by reinforcing simplistic and formulaic coverage. This leads to the further demand that coverage be sensational and arresting to get aired or printed. Compassion fatigue can also encourage media to abandon stories quickly due to the presumption that Western publics will quickly grow bored of similar or repeated stories. The earlier-discussed perception of Africa and much of the 'developing' world as being low-priority and low-interest news for Western audiences is reinforced by Moeller. She points out that post-Cold War cutbacks in the numbers of foreign correspondents stationed abroad have increasingly forced journalists to 'parachute' into situations for short periods of time. In terms of structuring media reports, a general trend towards abbreviating news items and decreasing foreign news budgets has, according to Moeller, led to the increased use of 'voiceover' on top of images so that journalists do not even have to be present at the site of events but can simply package information and images from wire services or freelancers.<sup>84</sup> Moeller's comments are relevant both to the Somalia intervention and to media coverage of Fallujah, Iraq, where voiceover was a frequently-used technique for coverage, and are valuable for returning to consideration of the political and economic environments in which media coverage is produced.

In contrast to those who stress the novelty of various aspects of the media-military-government relationship during the 1991 Gulf War are theorists who point out the extent to which news production has always been closely linked to the political and economic structures with which it co-exists. In this sense, the Gulf War would exhibit some new representational and structural aspects but it would also share many areas of continuity with past conflicts. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries much of global media have become multinational and conglomerated businesses, dominated by English-language giants primarily in Great Britain and the USA.<sup>85</sup> The majority of

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<sup>84</sup> Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>85</sup> This issue is discussed by almost all commentators on media and conflict including: Susan Carruthers, Daya Kishan Thussu, Bartholomew Sparrow, and the Glasgow Media Group.

Western media organisations are private, profit-making businesses who need to provide their shareholders with good returns through the selling of advertising space. There are concerns, notably those articulated by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, that these conditions of existence create sets of structures and operating procedures which make it difficult for individual journalists to produce original stories or to frame reports in ways that might challenge the prevailing economic and social status quo. Chomsky and Herman suggest that it is much harder to see processes of propaganda creation in capitalist societies where the media are free, privately-owned and portray themselves as spokespeople for free speech and community interests. Yet, as they illustrate, high start-up costs for media make it extremely difficult for a small player to survive in the media and communications sphere. Consequently, most agenda and news-setting are determined by a few, very wealthy companies.

Because advertising income is of major importance for the budgets of most media enterprises, advertisers have significant influence over media producers. Chomsky and Herman attribute the dearth of 'left-wing' news providers to the fact that media with this type of reputation have found it increasingly difficult to find funding in a largely-corporate environment. Following from the above points in their exposure of differentials in power relations, Chomsky and Herman outline the disciplining mechanisms for media who attempt to disagree with the stance of government or large business. The work of large, corporate public relations (PR) teams has largely replaced the research and investigation that would be otherwise required by journalists; these PR teams can flood the media with 'facts' to obscure or highlight certain issues. If these organisations can gather 'experts' to testify on their behalf, the media may then have to incur a significant amount of difficulty and expense in order to prove their 'unpopular' point.<sup>86</sup>

While the 1991 Gulf War triggered much discussion, several commentators highlight continuities in structures and cultures of war coverage dating back to the

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<sup>86</sup> Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1994), 20-26.

World Wars and particularly to the Vietnam War. *The 'Uncensored War': the Media and Vietnam*, Daniel Hallin's work on media coverage of the Vietnam War, has been of particular influence for theorists of media and conflict. Hallin used his case study to support the idea of a co-dependency relationship between the media and government, arguing that the twentieth century emphasis on 'objective journalism' actually led to closer ties between journalists and state organisations. Government officials routinely became the 'expert', 'credible' sources from whom journalists gathered their information and frame of reference for an event. Just as journalists often depend upon policymakers to present them with 'relevant' news to cover, policymakers need journalists to publicise and promote issues and actions that are important to them so that the general public become aware of their undertakings. Hallin, like Herman and Chomsky, points to the creation of self-referential circles of information and storylines through this co-dependency. During and after the Vietnam War, Hallin notes that the press consistently adopted the frameworks presented by government officials over alternatives from academics or war veterans, for example.<sup>87</sup> Hallin believes that journalists only rarely challenge dominant government perspectives or 'status quo' viewpoints. Chomsky and Herman's empirical work corresponds with that of Hallin; they cite the media's reliance on information provided by government and business leaders as one of their five 'filters' on media coverage.<sup>88</sup>

Hallin concludes that the problem with media coverage of Vietnam was its quality, not quantity. He feels that the American government frequently sent mixed messages about its aims and approaches in the region when using the media to communicate; this occurred both deliberately and due to internal disagreement. Despite their ability to access many areas of conflict in Vietnam and tell stories from the 'front', Hallin believes that American media occupied a relatively conservative vantage point during the conflict. Their primary 'expert' sources for framing events remained key Administration officials; critical perspectives on the war only began to emerge

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<sup>87</sup> See Daniel Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': the Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>88</sup> Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 2.

consistently once a serious split in agreement over Vietnam policy occurred within the US government. These factors, in Hallin's eyes, resulted in the American public never gaining a good understanding of why the US went to war in Vietnam or why their actions there ultimately resulted in failure.

Bartholomew Sparrow undertakes a more general study of many of the same issues as Hallin, Herman and Chomsky in his work, *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Sparrow speaks specifically of media-government relations in the US, but many of his comments are relevant for other Western media and governments. Sparrow argues that there is a strong public perception of the media as guardians of public interest against government corruption; this perception was particularly re-enforced in the 1960s and 1970s during the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. Journalistic codes echo these high ideals, holding journalists to the moral watchdog role they often believe they are fulfilling. In contrast to these prevailing beliefs, Sparrow suggests that the wider political and economic environment largely prevents the media from acting in this ideal 'guardian' role; in fact, the media are subject to many external forces.<sup>89</sup> Like Hallin, Sparrow believes that the media's key role is not primarily to provide a broad range of information to publics but rather to be agenda-setters in their packaging of issues and images. The media also function as attention-getters for certain issues; they confer legitimacy upon them and act as channels for persuasion and motivation. The give and take, co-dependent relationship between journalists and policymakers is again discussed. In order for journalists to 'get the scoop' and governments to 'get good press', productive relations must be maintained between these two groups. Relationships between individual journalists and particular government sources are often developed, feeding an already competitive environment between media organisations, which compete for sources as well as market share and advertisers.

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<sup>89</sup> Bartholomew Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 4.

In her work, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* Susan Carruthers also explores the media's mixed role of both supporting and challenging states' wartime actions. She suggests that the media's relationship with policymakers is often ambiguous in terms of whether the media is leading interpretation of events themselves or adopting the discourses used by 'experts' and politicians.<sup>90</sup> Like Hallin, she believes, however, that, for the most part, policy is only swayed by media organisations when it is already controversial or debated among policymakers. Carruthers feels that, increasingly, 'real-time' television may have somewhat of a 'push in-pull out' effect on governors by compressing their decision times to fit a twenty-four hour news cycle.

All of the abovementioned ideas challenge straightforward understandings of the 'CNN effect', a concept which argues that widespread media coverage of certain conflicts or issues can have a large impact on policymakers' decisions to involve themselves in a situation or to disengage from it. Prime examples given of this phenomenon include the Vietnam War, the Ethiopian famine of 1984-85 and the Somalia intervention, two of which predate the creation of CNN. Hallin, Sparrow and Carruthers argue the reverse, that it is more likely that a government or international organisation's interest or involvement in a particular conflict will be the driving force for media coverage. Carruthers also argues that in many cases the context and background of a story are less important than its potential to be brief and dramatic; conflicts or differences of opinion supported by compelling imagery tend to make the best 'news events'. As will be seen in the following sub-section, particularly in the case of the Somalia intervention there is strong evidence for the idea that the media's coverage patterns largely followed American governmental and UN actions in the state.

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<sup>90</sup> Susan Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 6-8 & 206.



*Covering Somalia: political and economic factors*

Only a small group of scholars have looked at the effects of media coverage on the Somalia intervention in particular. Their primary concerns have been trying to establish whether a causal link exists between amounts of media coverage of the Somalia crisis and policy actions of the Bush government of the time. The Somalia intervention has been a popular case study for those concerned with testing the existence of 'the CNN effect' in relations between the media, governments, organisations and audiences. Somalia is seen as important due to the fact that media images, first of famine and Marines landing on a beach and then of US soldiers' bodies being desecrated, were shown shortly before significant American governmental actions were taken, suggesting a connection between the two.

The studies have used a variety of methods to test this assertion, such as article counting, content analysis, elite interviewing and bureaucratic modelling. A general consensus which appears to have emerged is very similar to the view supported by Hallin, Sparrow and Carruthers: the media and government are co-dependent most of the time. In the specific case of Somalia, most of the authors cited below argue that there is little evidence to support a claim that media coverage drove the Bush administration to intervene in Somalia. If anything, these analytical works suggest that the media followed the US administration into Somalia.

One key exception to this general conclusion is the work of Peter Viggo Jakobsen, who argues that because no US national interests were at stake the intervention was justified solely on the basis of needing to end the human suffering shown in the media. Thus, Jakobsen's rationale is that, because there was no other 'good' reason for the US to intervene in Somalia besides 'humanitarianism', policymakers must have been at least somewhat swayed by media coverage.<sup>91</sup> Several other analysts do not make this assumption and instead conduct a more detailed study of varying amounts of Somalia media coverage. They argue that the volume of

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<sup>91</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement After the Cold War?" *Journal of Peace Research* 33, No. 2 (1996): 209.

coverage matters in determining how much effect the media will have on publics and policymakers. Therefore, low amounts of media coverage are taken to mean that the media were not actually the ones pushing the story and thus likely would not have had a large influence on policymakers.

Analysts who do not believe that media coverage was a primary factor in drawing US forces into Somalia do not, however, deny the media's influence altogether. Several key figures involved in the Somalia operation, including Ambassador Robert Oakley and Walter Clarke, Deputy Chief of Mission, do believe that President Bush felt a personal moral commitment to act in Somalia, based on seeing and hearing reports of the suffering.<sup>92</sup> While this affect may not have been sufficient to fully determine the Bush administration's choice to intervene, once troops were in the field they inevitably became characters in Somalia's mediatized story of conflict, suffering and potential reconciliation. From this point of political action, American public opinion of the mission in Somalia, and to a significantly lesser extent that of Somalis, became sources of information to be commented on and solicited by media and government. Perception of the mission, a key focus of this project, is not the primary interest of most of authors whose work is discussed below. Their focus is mainly on how the decision to intervene was made and they present complementary ways of understanding this decision despite the fact that their methodological concepts for approaching the intervention differ.

Conflict or divergent 'expert' opinions are seen as key for all the scholars in generating media interest in a situation. As Jonathan Mermin notes in his article, "Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy": "Although Congress had expressed concern over Somalia in the spring [of 1992], it had not challenged the Bush administration's policy of working through the UN to achieve a diplomatic solution...Conflict and movement only appeared in July, when Kassebaum and Simon declared the response of the Bush

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<sup>92</sup> See Oakley and Clarke interviews on website for PBS *Frontline*, "Ambush in Mogadishu", <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews>

administration inadequate and urged a change in policy.”<sup>93</sup> The Kassebaum and Simon declaration in this quote refers to the comments of a Republican senator, Nancy Kassebaum, who visited Somalia to witness the humanitarian crisis there firsthand in the summer of 1992, and Democratic senator Paul Simon, who supported her call for US intervention, contrary to the stated approach of the Bush administration. This splitting of ‘official’ American opinion on Somalia is recognised by all the authors as a key point at which the media increased its coverage of the region, which until this point had been almost non-existent.

This emphasis on the potential of key ‘actors’ corresponds with Frank Stech’s analysis of popular news frames. He stresses the importance of the “personalised actor” subframe, where individual leaders, spokespeople and organisations become the “normalised, official sources” who tie otherwise potentially fragmented actions together.<sup>94</sup> Other academics have presented slightly different factors as being of key importance for understanding why Somalia came onto the American agenda in a much more significant way in late 1992. However, the assumption of the importance of following ‘key actors’ through a storyline remains. As Stech suggests: “Media images convey a *dramatized story* subframe: beginnings, action style, plot lines and sub-plots, settings and scenery, rising and falling action...and endings that close with a chorus (journalists, politicians, experts, the public or all four) interpreting the moral lessons of the drama.”<sup>95</sup> Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus also point to the importance of looking at specific individuals who are able to influence the decisions of key policymakers.<sup>96</sup> These authors follow the actions and motivations of Andrew Natsios, an official at the American Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), illustrating his individual success and importance for bringing the Somalia story to the media and

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<sup>93</sup> Jonathan Mermin, “Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy”, *Political Science Quarterly* 112, No. 3 (Autumn 1997): 393.

<sup>94</sup> Frank J. Stech, “Winning CNN Wars”, *Parameters* (Autumn 1994), 39-40, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/a-index.htm> (accessed July 18, 2007).

<sup>95</sup> Stech, “Winning CNN Wars”, 40. Italics are author’s own.

<sup>96</sup> Steven Livingston & Todd Eachus, “Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered”, *Political Communication* 12, Is. 4 (1995).

key policymakers through persistent media briefings and meetings with senior administration figures.

Other important work on the Somalia intervention includes Piers Robinson's article counting and content analysis of the tone of print articles and television stories during a period of the lead-up to the American intervention in Somalia.<sup>97</sup> This is probably the closest of all the studies undertaken on Somalia to the methodology of this work. Robinson comes to similar conclusions to the authors mentioned above. His counting indicates that the American media had almost no sustained interest in Somalia before the decision was made to send in US troops. The media therefore appears not to have induced the 'CNN effect' at all but rather to have largely followed American governmental actions. Robinson found that during this initial build-up to the intervention coverage was overwhelmingly supportive of the mission and empathetic towards Somalis.<sup>98</sup> This discovery will be an interesting point from which to explore changes in the content and style of media discourse, which likely helped to encourage growing uncertainty and eventual wide-scale American public rejection of the mission.

The authors discussed in this sub-section are relevant for this research because their work helps to break down and analyse the complex, multifaceted interactions which comprise the beginning of 'the Somalia intervention', particularly those between the media and governments. Their work provides strong evidence for scepticism regarding the 'CNN effect', along with that of Hallin, Sparrow and Carruthers. This project will also support the premise that, for the most part, media discourses are heavily influenced by the policy initiatives, opinions and statements of government officials, as well as international and domestic organisations deemed to be 'authoritative' or 'expert'. Numerous examples, in the cases of the Somalia intervention and US involvement in Fallujah, Iraq, will illustrate that the content and timing of media stories is closely linked to the activities of influential, governing bodies. The

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<sup>97</sup> See Piers Robinson, "Operation Restore Hope and the Illusion of a News Media Driven Intervention", *Political Studies* 49 (2001).

<sup>98</sup> Analysis of the tone of articles during the first thirteen days after the announcement of the intervention was done on the basis of counting the number of times three key words from each of four frames labelled 'support', 'critical', 'empathy' and 'distancing/neutrality' were used.

media are thus understood by this work as an integrated, co-dependent part of their political and economic environments, rather than acting primarily as highly-independent, investigative organisations.

This project will go beyond these authors in terms of the scope of media coverage it analyses, however, and will expand greatly upon analysis of themes in the content of this coverage. Additionally, no assumption will be made that media coverage approaches are exclusively 'set' or 'caused' by government discourses. The importance of studying the content of media items in this project rests instead on the idea that there is a high level of interaction and shared development of interpretive discourses between governments and policymakers, various organisations, media and audiences. Indeed, the extent to which individuals can be classified into only one of such groups is questionable. It is to be expected, as suggested the work described above, that the levels of influence one 'group' has over another are usually unequal; however, these relational influences can be subject to change.

*Structural studies: embedding in Iraq 2003 and the current media landscape*

The co-dependency relationship between media and governments has been fed in a circular fashion during recent and current conflict periods, which are often characterised by a vast production of 'information' for journalists to report and continual 'breaking news' items to which government officials must respond. In these situations, journalists become very dependent on the policymakers and bureaucrats who 'feed them' new information for publication or broadcast. Almost all major US government departments now have their own public affairs and media relations divisions which control flows of information to the media and respond to media stories and enquiries.<sup>99</sup> At times, these agencies can easily create an excess of information, which can overwhelm journalists working to tight deadlines in a twenty-four hour news cycle.

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<sup>99</sup> Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians*, 11 & 71-72.

Several analysts of media and conflict, including Carruthers, Daya Kishan Thussu, and Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer, discuss the ways in which an abundance of information may actually have minimal positive effect on the analytical depth of journalists' work when they have little or no time to research, read or evaluate this information before their stories go to press or air.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, there is also no guarantee that increased amounts of broadcast time or print space ensure greater depth of coverage, as has often been evident during crisis reporting in the Gulf, Afghanistan or in New York in the wake of 9/11. As Baudrillard and others have pointed out, much of twenty-four hour news coverage can become more speculative than substantial in these situations.

In their work on embedded media coverage of the Iraq war starting in 2003, Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer suggest that the immediacy and proximity of reporters to their military units meant that the larger significance of American military actions in Iraq could be lost in the large numbers of stories filed by individual embeds who only were able to ascertain activities within their very small sphere of access.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, journalists who covered the war from the American-created media centre in Qatar often seemed to fare little better in their efforts at gaining a broader picture of the war. Many complained of time-consuming security procedures, delays in the Bush administration's confirmation of reported actions, a clear 'pecking order' favouring TV reporters during question periods, and the predominance of 'spin' over factual news provided by media briefers.<sup>102</sup>

In his co-edited work with Des Freedman, *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, Daya Kishan Thussu's assessment of modern media-military relations is similar to that of Carruthers, Hallin and Sparrow. Thussu believes that, rather than challenging government norms, early twenty-first century media has encouraged a blurring of media-military boundaries with the use of embedded reporters and military personnel

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<sup>100</sup> See Daya Kishan Thussu & Des Freedman eds., *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 120; Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication & Conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, 199 and Howard Tumber & Jerry Palmer, *The Media at War: the Iraq Crisis* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 25.

<sup>101</sup> Tumber & Palmer, *The Media at War: the Iraq Crisis*, 25.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 66-68.

working as consultants for media programs. He points to the importance of Der Derian's concept of 'virtuous war' to explain this new position of media as an integral part of modern warfare, along with increasing ties between military training and technology programs and Hollywood film and video game production.<sup>103</sup> Embedding is an especially important part of fostering this bond; when they are embedded, journalists are often reliant on their military units for technology, communication links, transportation, and, most basically, their safety and protection in a war zone.<sup>104</sup> Many journalists have expressed concern about the embedding procedure; they point to the risks to their impartiality and the ways in which embedding might affect their treatment should they be captured by 'enemy' fighters.

Tumber and Palmer's work extensively covers journalists' thoughts on embedding in the Iraq crisis of 2003, where more than 500 of over 3000 journalists who flocked to the region were embedded.<sup>105</sup> In this case, the embedding plan allotted certain numbers of places to news organisations, rather than to individual reporters. This system meant that it was very difficult for freelancers to gain accreditation. The US Defense Department could effectively sanction news organisations for correspondent 'misbehaviour' by allotting them fewer or less 'choice' positions.<sup>106</sup> While the Pentagon insisted that embeds would not be 'held hostage' by a military unit and could leave whenever they wanted, once embedded, reporters' freedom of movement was greatly curtailed. If journalists decided to leave their units to conduct independent reporting, they were effectively barred from returning to their embed units later. Additionally, part of the embed arrangement required journalists and their news organisations to sign documents promising that they would comply with rules about what they could and could not report, primarily for reasons surrounding the safety of the unit and protecting future military strategies. Many journalists, however, found it difficult to present coherent reports while omitting all potentially

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<sup>103</sup> See Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*.

<sup>104</sup> Thussu & Freedman, *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict* 24/7, 120.

<sup>105</sup> Tumber & Palmer, *The Media at War: the Iraq Crisis*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

compromising information for the military; this provoked some media-military tension during the crisis.

Some media professionals responded positively to embedding. They argued that it gave many journalists a chance to develop a strong understanding of how the military works from the inside. Others, however, confirmed the fears of several of the abovementioned authors that the embedding process proved problematic when trying to develop context and a broad picture of the conflict. Embedding also increased safety risks for journalists in what was already one of the most lethal wars yet for the media:<sup>107</sup>

Philip Knightley described the Iraq War as the one 'when journalists seemed to become a target'... and John Simpson, the BBC world affairs editor, who was injured in a 'friendly fire' incident, blamed the deaths of many of the journalists on the 'ultimate act of censorship'. He believes that the system of embedding meant that journalists operating independently of the US and British troops became potential targets: 'In this war, the Americans were more than twice as dangerous to the proper exercise of journalism, the freedom of reporters to see for themselves what was happening, as the Iraqis were.'<sup>108</sup>

Discussions about the style of media presentation of conflict and the media's ability to cover conflict areas also link clearly to issues surrounding the media's structural set-up. In his works, Daya Kishan Thussu speaks extensively about the political economy of the media. He claims that TV has quickly gained status as the most privileged and authoritative source of information over print and radio news. English-language productions have dominated worldwide, and continue to, in all types of media; within the hierarchy of TV news, British and American networks remain ahead. CNN is estimated to reach 150 million homes in 212 countries while BBC World reaches 241 million people in 200 countries. Among other forms of media, the TV

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<sup>107</sup> Figures from the IFJ [International Federation of Journalists] show that numbers of journalists killed in the 2003 Iraq War were unprecedented. Over the 21 years of war in Vietnam between 1954 and 1975, some 63 journalists were killed. In the Iraq conflict, 17 journalists or media staff died in just six weeks. The casualty rate among media staff was higher than in any other conflict and, in proportion to the numbers present, even higher than among soldiers of the coalition. From Tumber & Palmer, *The Media at War: the Iraq Crisis*, 36.

<sup>108</sup> Tumber & Palmer, *The Media at War: The Iraq Crisis*, 37-38.



market generally is especially lucrative and expected to keep growing. Global numbers of TV sets have tripled since 1980; much of this growth has been in Asia and a result of improving satellite penetration of once isolated areas.<sup>109</sup>

At the same time, the economics and format of TV news is changing dramatically. Audiences for peak-time evening news are declining from over ninety percent of total viewers in the 1960s to around thirty percent in 2000. This decline in news watching has happened alongside the American deregulation of cross-media ownership laws in the mid-1980s.<sup>110</sup> This step prompted large mergers of news networks with entertainment companies, such as the AOL-Time Warner-EMI merger (the biggest in history), and a move towards a more mixed 'infotainment' style of news presentation. When interest in traditional news broadcasting appears to be declining significantly, the format in which expanding world audiences receive their TV 'news' is an important area for further investigation. New styles and contents of news production will likely have important influences on how local, national and international events are conceptualised by audiences.

Carruthers' vision of the political economy and social structures in which the media function is also similar to those of Thussu, Hallin, Sparrow and, to a large extent, Moeller. Reporters and news editors are seen as constrained by a globalised media business situation. Carruthers suggests that financial considerations become especially important with foreign news coverage because it remains the most expensive news media venture.<sup>111</sup> It is also routinely assumed that audiences are most interested in the news of those 'closest' to them. This often results in different values being put on human lives based on their proximity to 'home' audiences. Some surveyed audiences, however, have remarked that their primary difficulty with foreign news is not lack of

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<sup>109</sup> Thussu & Freedman, *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict* 24/7, 118-120.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 118-120.

<sup>111</sup> Carruthers, *The Media at War*, 15.

interest but rather an inability to understand stories due to lack of historical knowledge and context of the issue area.<sup>112</sup>

According to the range of commentators discussed above, the result of these structural and stylistic media changes for Western publics is that most readers/viewers/listeners of news are not appealed to in their capacity as voters/citizens but as potential consumers of advertised goods, whose corporate producers determine the economic viability of news organisations. This dependence on advertisers means that these businesses must be kept happy; newsrooms therefore often become places of hierarchy and convention. Indeed, Sparrow cites that an average of seventy percent of news story content is reproduced across the major Western media outlets. Thussu produces a similar figure, claiming that three global wire services, Associated Press (AP), Reuters and Agence France Press are the source of about eighty percent of worldwide public information.<sup>113</sup> These figures hint at the similarities in decision-making processes across media-corporation divides, as well as the increasing tendency of these corporations to cost-cut by purchasing pre-packaged yet customisable news from a small number of other businesses, the wire services. Meanwhile, the general public finds it hard to judge the quality of news output, since few people have time to cross-check their media sources and tend to take their news on faith from a few, 'trusted' sources.

There has been recent academic interest in the possibility of public resistance to the greatly-consolidated political-economy of Western, and indeed global, media. The Internet has been especially useful in providing groups and individuals with little political power and few economic resources with an alternative means of producing and circulating information and has become an important source of information for many global citizens. While this new potential must be readily acknowledged, particularly during 2004 at the time of the Fallujah intervention, the Internet was only

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<sup>112</sup> See *Making Sense of the World*, A joint BBC News- DFID study of public perceptions of television coverage of developing countries, October 2002, [www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/makingsense.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/makingsense.pdf)

<sup>113</sup> Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians*, 131 and Daya Kishan Thussu, *International Communication: Continuity & Change* (London: Arnold Publishers, 2000), 152.

in development stages during the early 1990s when the Somalia intervention took place. Sources of news for audiences were thus largely restricted to radio, print media and, to a great extent, television during this earlier case study and analysed coverage investigates representation of the intervention across some of this range. To maintain a comparative focus based on analysis of similar forms of media, the Fallujah case study coverage was sourced from similar, mainstream newspaper and television sources. More detailed discussion of the selection process for case studies and coverage sources will appear in the following methodology chapter.

### **Conclusion: A Return to the Larger Picture**

As is obvious from the diversity of work in this chapter, a wide range of academic literature can be applied to study of the media's role in Western societies in general and specific terms. I have charted a course from broad studies of societal institutions, the discursive nature of language and visual artefacts, and the politics and history of various forms of representation and identity-creation towards more specialised research areas that are specifically focused on aspects of the functioning and/or the content of Western mass media. Even narrower fields of study, such as media coverage of conflicts and disasters, still contain a sizable amount of variation. Research methods range from the more abstract musings of Baudrillard to Tumber and Palmer's interview-based investigations of journalists' experiences covering conflict. While linkages are often claimed and subject matter routinely overlaps, the methodological approaches of media and communications research appear to roughly split into two research fields, which as P. Eric Louw suggested can be loosely labelled the political-economic and the cultural.<sup>114</sup> With the exception of Hallin's work and that of The Glasgow Media Group<sup>115</sup>, however, little detailed case study research has been done by either side. Claims are made on both sides and supporting examples are

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<sup>114</sup> Louw, *The Media & Cultural Production*, 2.

<sup>115</sup> See John Eldridge ed., *Getting the Message. News, Truth & Power* (London: Routledge, 1993) and John Eldridge ed., *Glasgow Media Group Reader Volume 1* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

offered, but these only rarely come from sustained engagement with coverage of a specific event.

As Susan Carruthers argues in a recent book chapter which attempts to bridge the gap between these two scholarly approaches: "In this division of labour (somewhat schematically overdrawn here), media studies, NGO activists, and international relations scholars tend to concentrate on Western policy processes and outcomes, while Africanists, anthropologists, and political geographers deconstruct the poverty of media imagery and analysis of complex crises."<sup>116</sup> Following Carruthers, this project will also attempt to work across these boundaries, precisely by engaging with existing ideas in both roughly-defined 'fields' and adding substantive case study findings. The project undertakes analysis of a greater amount of Somalia media coverage over a more sustained period than academics such as Mermin, Livingston and Eachus, and Robinson, who have looked specifically at the influence of media coverage in the lead-up to the intervention in 1992. It thus helps to add to the pool of research on media coverage of this event. Coverage is also engaged with in a substantially different way, one which is more focused on thinking through the cultural implications of coverage content. The dynamics and flows of influence between various governmental, media, NGO, international organisation and audience groups are considered, but are not theorised or investigated in the causal way undertaken by these other academics. I would argue that the boundaries between these 'groups' are often fluid and unclear and thus causal links are difficult, if not impossible to pinpoint.

In speaking to the more 'cultural' side of media studies, I have used a research approach which owes much to those who have pioneered the development of the concept of 'discourse' in social sciences. Two key figures at the forefront of this type of theory are Foucault and Derrida. The detail of my case study research, however, will also help to support the existing findings of several academics who are also applying the work of Foucault and Derrida to areas of cultural geography, media studies and

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<sup>116</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, "Tribalism and Tribulation: Media Constructions of 'African savagery' and 'Western Humanitarianism' in the 1990s", in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allan & Barbie Zelizer, 156 (London: Routledge, 2004).

international politics, including Gregory, Der Derian, Stephen Graham and David Campbell.<sup>117</sup> In very recent case studies, such as that of Fallujah, highlighting dominant themes and providing supporting examples from media coverage can substantiate the initial observations of many commentators and academics.

If the enduring, complex and often damaging relationships between 'the West' and 'Africa' (one might also broadly read previously-colonised 'others' here) are to be exposed and challenged, the Western media's role in perpetuating the maintenance of such dichotomizations must be investigated both in terms of the content of its products and in terms of its position within the global political economy. The literature surveyed and highlighted above represents, in fitting terminology, the theoretical 'frame' through which the case study material has been approached. The following chapter will deal more extensively with the methodological strategies used to undertake this work. Further justification and explanation for my case study approach will be found here.

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<sup>117</sup> These authors have investigated or engaged with media coverage of a wide variety of areas including: Iraq during the 2003 war (Gregory), Iraq during Gulf War I (Der Derian), Fallujah, Iraq (S. Graham) and Bosnia and Sudan (D. Campbell).

## **Chapter Two – Approaching the Case Studies: A Background to Method & Media Sources**

The preceding literature review chapter outlined the many theoretical approaches that have been used to consider concepts of interpretation, knowledge creation and discourse, the societal position of photographs, the structure and political economy of the media, and the media's coverage of conflicts and disasters. These approaches have been influential to this project's overall style, organisation and conclusions. This chapter will specifically examine this project's two case studies: the Somalia intervention and American attacks on Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. Historically, Somalia is of great significance, as it represents the advent of post-Cold War Western hopes for leadership of global humanitarian interventions and also illustrates some of the immediate problems faced during such undertakings. By the post-9/11 period of the comparative case study, Fallujah, American governmental discourses with regards to intervening globally were, at least rhetorically, substantially different from the time of Somalia. Despite the different geopolitical setting of each case study, there is evidence to suggest that particular ways of understanding 'other' places and people have remained entrenched and pervasive in daily Western discourses; media play an important role in the creation, distribution and perpetuation of these discourses.

Building on this brief overview this chapter outlines why these two case studies were chosen and why a case study-based approach is important for this piece of research. A brief discussion of the media sources chosen for specific analysis in both cases will then provide some background and justification for use of these particular sources. The approach taken to interpret media texts and images, a discourse analysis, is also further described. Following this practical description of methodology, summaries of the trends in numbers of selected newspaper and television items throughout the analysed periods of the Somalia intervention and Fallujah sieges will be provided. These summaries will leave readers with a sense of the events' chronologies, specifically with regards to media coverage, so that following chapters can focus

overwhelmingly on coverage content. The counts also help to justify my choice to limit analysis of Somalia intervention television coverage throughout the two year 1992-1993 period and to focus particularly on media coverage during 'high points' in coverage production with regards to Fallujah, during the months of April, October and November 2004. A final chapter section will re-emphasize the importance of Foucault and Derrida's theoretical contributions to the study of discourses, as the work of these two scholars is the primary basis upon which my project builds.

### **The Case Studies: Why They Are Important & How They Were Selected**

As was suggested by Susan Carruthers in the previous chapter, analysis and critique of media coverage tends to fall roughly into two categories: those who are primarily interested in the effects of interactions between media, policymakers, organisations and audiences and the results of media representations on policymaking processes, and those concerned with the content of media coverage and its affects. Both groups have used case studies and historical examples to support their assessments and their theoretical points. For those interested in the interaction between media, policymakers, organisations and audiences, case studies often appear to be chosen to test widespread perceptions about which societal groups had influence over others in defining certain events.<sup>1</sup> Researchers who are predominately interested in the content of media coverage often choose cases for study based on the perceived wider significance of the case beyond its time and place. Alternately, the goal of the research may be to look at the views and experiences of those specifically involved or concerned with the case. This project is more closely aligned with the goals of those studying content in depth.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Hallin's work on Vietnam War coverage has been widely cited not only because of the large body of coverage he drew upon for analysis but also due to widespread public and governmental perceptions about the power of media images for decreasing American public support for the War. Investigating the legitimacy of these perceptions was one of Hallin's explicit reasons for choosing the Vietnam case study. Testing similar assumptions was a research aim for Piers Robinson, Steven Livingston & Todd Eachus and Jonathan Mermin in their studies of Somalia, although they go into significantly less depth than Hallin when dealing with coverage content.

As stated above, the Somalia intervention was chosen to be this work's primary case study largely because of its historical timing. Occurring soon after the end of the Cold War, events in Somalia came at a time when America was beginning to contemplate its potential new international roles. This was a period of particularly obvious flux in policies, budgets and governmental agency roles; old and new international paradigms and discourses overlapped and often produced contradictory impulses. After the 'success' of the 1991 Gulf War, the US military establishment was confident in its ability to wage high tech, predominately air wars. It was less optimistic, however, about its role as a potential peace enforcement body in multinational efforts to end civil strife overseas; it was these types of actions that it was increasingly being encouraged to undertake. It is therefore important to contemplate the perceived influences of the Somalia intervention on American foreign policy discourses and Americans' and, more broadly 'Western' citizens', perceptions of intervention in 'other' places. Post-Somalia, the 1990s remained unsettled, without an obvious dominant discourse emerging to structure America's role in the world.<sup>2</sup>

When considering Somalia's influence on the American government, the media, and the practice of intervention following the US pullout in early 1994, the spectre of the Rwandan genocide haunts international policy history. Western media coverage of this event was not extensive during the height of the killings, possibly due both to the dangers for journalists of operating in Rwanda but also likely because many Western governments, particularly the US, seemed to actively attempt to ignore and downplay events that they would not even label 'genocide' for fear of being bound by the Genocide Conventions to become involved. American failure to lead a world effort to stop the violence in Rwanda when it was occurring has frequently been analysed using bureaucratic politics methodologies.<sup>3</sup> These studies suggest that communication

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<sup>2</sup> For a compilation of work on this subject, see Gearoid O'Tuathail, Simon Dalby & Paul Routledge eds., *The Geopolitics Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Gearoid O'Tuathail, "The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millenium", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, No. 1 (March 2000): 166-178

<sup>3</sup> See the work of Samantha Power, such as "Bystanders to Genocide", *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 2001), <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/power.htm> (accessed June 23, 2007). For specific information



between crucial US governmental bodies often broke down, meaning that the scale and scope of the events was frequently not passed between political bureaucracies or to the general public through news media. Events went underreported or unreported.

Overarching reasons for these multiple failures were encompassed in terms which denote specific ways of understanding past events, such as 'Vietmalia syndrome'.<sup>4</sup> American diplomat, Richard Holbrooke coined this phrase to suggest that experiences from Vietnam and Somalia were continuing to haunt US policymakers when decisions on whether to station American troops overseas had to be made.<sup>5</sup> Fear, excessive fear many suggested, of US casualties was preventing the American government from becoming involved in important international activities. Holbrooke is only one among many who have attempted to articulate a link between the American experience in Somalia and its more recent foreign undertakings. The ways in which the Somalia experience may have changed America's use of force overseas, its willingness to act as part of multinational peacekeeping teams, and its handling of media reporting on its international military actions have been of particular interest to academics, international organisations and domestic policymakers and institutions.<sup>6</sup>

The US military learned its 'Black Hawk down' lessons almost immediately, and began training and technological work to deal with new, often non-state threats seen to emerge from urban, civilian-populated areas of 'failed' states. It can be argued that America's foreign policy stance did not find a single, powerfully-articulated new direction until after the September 11<sup>th</sup> events. Foreign policy has since been structured primarily around 'the war on terror' and dealing pre-emptively with states and

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on media coverage, see Allan Thompson ed., *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For more on the creation and use of this term, see Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House Inc., 1998). Holbrooke felt that the shadow of 'Black Hawk down' events hung heavily over the US military during negotiations about how to end conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

<sup>5</sup> See Andrew Lam, "An American Tragedy", *The Nation* online, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070312/lam> (accessed June 23, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> For information on changing US military and administration relationships with media, see Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars", *Parameters* (Autumn 1994): 37-56. Somalia's effects on new military strategies are documented in Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Debbi Newton, "Blackhawk down 10 years later: Remembering the Battle of Mogadishu and how it changed the way the military trains", *Connecticut Guardian* 4, No. 10 (October 2003): 1-2 & 4-5.

organisations deemed to threaten US security. To the extent that Somalia has re-emerged in current political discourses, it has become linked to this new narrative. Much of Muslim Africa is being represented by parts of the US military, as well as some politicians and commentators, as a hiding and training ground for al-Qaeda and the Islamic terrorist groups now seen to threaten the 'free' world.<sup>7</sup>

Lessons from Somalia, particularly those in the military sphere, and the development of the 'war on terror' discourse, help to explain a great deal of the relevance of this work's second, comparative case study, Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's alleged links to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, and claims that he had the capacity to deploy weapons of mass destruction against 'the West', were key justifications for the American war against the Iraqi regime and its occupation of the country beginning in March 2003. The emergence of 'terrorist' and 'insurgent' groups in Iraq meant that much of the US military's new doctrine on fighting urban battles with non-traditional enemies were put into effect; many of these principles had been developed following the disastrous urban combat experience of 'Black Hawk down' in Mogadishu and were 'tested' on Fallujah in particular.

Likely due to both dissimilar circumstances and lessons learned from past conflict involvement, many aspects of the American intervention in Iraq are run differently to the Somalia situation. In the case of Iraq, the US acted aggressively and pre-emptively, rather than in a humanitarian response to a civil conflict. Analysis and comparison of media coverage content, however, will illustrate ways in which the discursive representations employed by policymakers and media in Iraq were often similar to those used in Somalia over ten years earlier despite the different circumstances, different actors involved and changed approaches to managing conflict. These discourses can be roughly divided into two broad sections, representation of places and people, with many related sub-themes. For example, despite differences in

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<sup>7</sup> For examples of this view, see Stewart M. Powell, "Swamp of Terror in the Sahara", *Air Force Magazine* (November 2004): 50-54; Ken Menkhaus, "Chapter 3: Somalia, Global Security and the War on Terrorism", *The Adelphi Papers* 364, No. 1 (March 2004): 49-75 and James Phillips, "Somalia and al-Qaeda: Implications for the War on Terrorism", <http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/BG1526.cfm> (accessed June 28, 2007).

the style of and motivation for the two interventions, discourses of humanitarian care and desires to 'democratise' Iraqi and Somali people were common in American government statements and media reports from each situation. In both cases, however, civilians' opinions and stories regarding their experiences of the interventions were often minimal in media coverage, denying these groups a voice on their own circumstances. Analysis of Western media representations of Somalia and Fallujah, as well as Somali people and Fallujans, supported by coverage examples, will form the bulk of this work's research and will contribute to academic study of English-language media representation of conflict and disaster.

While these factors will not be focused on in as much depth, conditions for media in both case studies, while significantly different, often appear to have resulted in similar trends in media items' content. Media arriving in Iraq entered a situation where their access to the country and its people was largely controlled by the American military, who established a presence in the country. By contrast, in Somalia many Western media outlets were already *in situ*, had covered aspects of the situation before UN and US troops arrived, and had no military restrictions imposed on their activities after these groups' arrival. In both situations, however, media faced limitations on their ability to report. Physical danger, from both American and 'enemy' groups, was an issue in each case. Overt and subtle military and governmental attempts at controlling and censoring particular media stories also occurred at various times in both Somalia and Fallujah. Rich possibilities for comparison thus exist between these two very different American military interventions in terms of linkages through shifting foreign policy discourses, in which representations of 'other' places and people are key, and in terms of conditions for media reporting the conflicts.

### *The case study approach*

With the relevance and possibilities for comparison between the two chosen case studies laid out above, it is also important to answer the question of why a case study approach was taken. The 'deep' case study approach used for this work can be

contrasted with one which would have taken a small number of examples of media coverage from many different instances of American international intervention. These examples could either be from a single media form, such as television, or from a variety of mediums. As a primary goal of this project was to explore the possible affects of media discourses, I wanted to undertake as detailed and sustained an analysis of each case study as possible in order to obtain a sizable volume of coverage material.

Particularly in the case of Somalia, I wanted to differentiate my work from that of others who have primarily analysed media item counts or have looked only at short time periods during the intervention in depth.<sup>8</sup> These types of studies very rarely deal with the content of their surveyed media items in any detail and this project aims to add to this area of knowledge.

In order to locate trends within coverage content, it was deemed important to survey a sizable volume of coverage within a 'relevant' period of time. Examples of particular visual and narrative styles in coverage that are given in this project thus tend to be representative of many other examples that could have been presented or else are included as important moments of anomaly and difference found in coverage discourses. The length of time over which coverage was surveyed was based, again, on historical factors deemed to delimit the scope of the 'event' which media were representing. In the primary case of Somalia, coverage analysis was started months before the famine became heavily covered by Western media, prompting UN and American intervention. A portion of this 'prelude' period was important to analyse, despite the fact that coverage was low at this stage, in order to investigate how Somalia was being discursively and visually represented before it became 'major' news in the early 1990s. For this reason it was also deemed important to review historical academic work on Somalia and its people, which is undertaken in Chapter Three.

The beach landings of Marines in Mogadishu in December 1992 and the 'Black Hawk down' events in October 1993 are routinely thought to be important moments of

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<sup>8</sup> This includes the work of those cited in the 'Covering Somalia' sub-section of "Reporting War and Death" in Chapter 1 such as: Jonathan Mermin, Steven Livingston & Todd Eachus, Piers Robinson and Peter Viggo Jakobsen.

beginning and closure for American involvement in Somalia. They are moments book-ending this 'event' which are strongly remembered, largely due to their media coverage. The analytical period for Somalia therefore encompassed both these moments and focuses heavily on coverage during them. Despite a focus on these beginning and end periods, a key aim of this project with regards to Somalia was also to fill in gaps between these two events. While Somalia is often remembered as two particular, and in many ways opposing, moments, I believe it is important to deconstruct perceptions of dichotomy or disjuncture between these events. In order to develop a deeper understanding of how Somalia and Somalis were represented throughout the intervention period, it is crucial to follow their media coverage through time, in order to spot changes, continuities and contradictions.

As a complement to my analysis of Somalia media coverage, I interviewed Paul Lowe, a photojournalist, in November 2005. My goal in this interview was to explore a journalist's thoughts on how events in Somalia were represented, both by himself and by other journalists. Lowe travelled to Somalia twice: in August 1992, when the extent of famine there was only beginning to be covered by media, and in December 1992, in order to cover the American intervention.<sup>9</sup> His comments on taking photographs in Somalia, his experiences in Somalia generally, and his overall thoughts on photographing conflict and famine situations provided useful evidence and points of consideration for my coverage analysis and in my discussions of academic and policymaker understandings of the Somalia intervention. While I was unsuccessful in gaining further interviews with journalists and media personnel, I believe that such interviews would be valuable to pursue in future research.

The Fallujah case study has been included in an effort to explore how this particular Iraqi city and its people were represented by Western media during an important time in their recent history, as the city was attacked by American forces twice

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<sup>9</sup> In August 1992, Lowe went to Somalia with a minimal guarantee from a European newspaper but says essentially he was personally interested in shooting the story of Somalia, particularly in black and white film. In December 1992, Lowe had a guarantee from the American *Life* magazine to cover the troop arrival. He did this in colour film but also shot some black and white images.

in one year. Historical-discourse and foreign policy-related reasons for comparing Fallujah with Somalia have been given above, and have also been discussed in the introduction. Due to limited time and resources, study of Fallujah's representation is more limited in time scale and with regards to the specificity of media sources analysed than Somalia. Study of this case only begins at the moment when Fallujah became notorious, particularly in American media coverage. This was the moment of the US contractor killings in March 2004, which prompted the first siege in April 2004. Coverage of this attack, and a following one in November, are particularly focused upon, due to the fact that they represent dramatic high points in media interest in Fallujah, as will be numerically illustrated in a following section of this chapter. Again due to restrictions on time and resources, the months between the two sieges in April and November 2004 are not analysed consistently, unlike the period between the beginning and ending moments in Somalia. Despite the fact that it is based on fewer media items, the Fallujah case study still aims to highlight and explore continuities, contradictions and changes in the ways in which this city and its inhabitants were represented and to compare these representations with those of Somalia and Somalis.

Because a primary research goal of this work is to explore how conflict and violence are represented in 'Western' media, British and American sources were chosen. I made these selections not only because of the lack of language barrier for my analysis but also because of the dominance of these two countries in global media production, as well as within 'the West', as outlined in Chapter One. Choosing two different national sources of coverage also provided the possibility to compare the extent to which textual, verbal and visual representations of places and people are shared or differ across state and ownership divides. The decision to use newspaper and television as the two analysed media forms was based, in the primary case of Somalia, on the fact that in the early 1990s these were ways in which substantial sections of the British and American publics received their international news. Although this situation has likely changed in the case of Fallujah, with the rise of the Internet, newspaper and television remain key sources of news and consistency in

treatment of the two case studies was privileged over the introduction of new, Internet news sources.

The sourcing of news items was also a major limiting factor in choosing forms of media to analyse. In the case of newspapers, historical coverage, in text with descriptions of accompanying images, is relatively easy to access through the Lexis Nexis database. Television coverage is more difficult and expensive to obtain, but that which was acquired was either ordered in videotape form or, in the case of newer material for Fallujah, watched through streaming online. The Vanderbilt Television News Archive, based at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, US, was the source of all American television coverage. BBC television coverage for the Somalia case was obtained through the British Film Institute in London, UK. The various media sources which were used for each case study will now be explored in depth and the choice to use each source justified.

## Media Sources

As mentioned above, the discursive analysis of texts and images which has been undertaken for both case studies differs from the methodological styles of other academic studies of the Somalia intervention and thus adds to this area of research. This project also aims to provide additional support to existing and ongoing work on media and military representations of Fallujah.<sup>10</sup> In this effort, two television networks' and two newspapers' coverage of the Somalia intervention were closely investigated, one of each from Britain and the US, from within a two year period from January 1, 1992 until December 31, 1993. This period covers the months leading up to the US/UN aid airlift and troop intervention in mid to late 1992 through to just after the fateful 'Black Hawk down' mission in October 1993. *The New York Times* was chosen as the

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<sup>10</sup> This includes the work of geographers such as Stephen Graham and Derek Gregory. See Stephen Graham, "Cities and 'the War on Terror'", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, No. 2 (2006): 255-276; Stephen Graham, "Remember Fallujah: Demonizing Space, Constructing Atrocity", *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 23, No. 1 (2005): 1-10 and Derek Gregory, "The Death of the Civilian?", *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 24, Is. 5 (2006): 633-638.

Somalia case study's American newspaper source because of its reputation as a world leader in the accuracy, depth and insight of its news coverage. It trails only *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* in national circulation, has won far more Pulitzer Prizes than any other American newspaper and has been known for its early 'scoops' on stories of importance since its creation in 1851.<sup>11</sup> *The New York Times* was also a founding member of The Associated Press wire service in 1856 with other major news organisations.

In 1896, the paper was acquired by publisher Adolph Ochs, who coined the term 'All the News That's Fit to Print', interpreted at the time as an attempt to differentiate the paper from the perceived 'yellow' journalism of other New York publications.<sup>12</sup> Ochs was largely responsible for *The New York Times*' emerging international scope and reputation. Although *The New York Times* has been downsizing recently, like many other print media, by the end of 2005 it still employed over 350 full-time reporters and about forty photographers. In the new millennium, it has been trying to strengthen its status as a national newspaper; it currently has sixteen news bureaus in the New York region, eleven national bureaus and twenty-six foreign news bureaus.

*The Times* (often known as *The Times* of London to differentiate it from many other newspapers with 'Times' in their titles) was chosen as the primary case study's UK source because it is likely to attract a roughly similar reader demographic in the UK and also has been historically described as an outlet committed to 'balanced' and 'in depth international news coverage. Like *The New York Times*, *The Times* has a venerable history, dating back to 1785.<sup>13</sup> For much of its early existence, *The Times* had little competition and built its reputation around contributions from important figures in

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<sup>11</sup> See *The New York Times* company website for a wide variety of facts about the publication, [www.nytco.com/investors-nyt-circulation.html](http://www.nytco.com/investors-nyt-circulation.html) (accessed March 20, 2007). In 2006, the NYT had a circulation of roughly 1,086,798 copies on weekdays and 1,623,697 on Sundays.

<sup>12</sup> The term 'yellow journalism' was coined in the 1890s in the US and refers to journalism which is exploitative and sensational, aimed at grabbing readers' attention. See W. J. Greenwood, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> *The Times* online, [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/debate/feedback/article1185820.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/debate/feedback/article1185820.ece) (accessed March 27, 2007).



politics, science, and the arts. It was also among the first newspapers to send special correspondents abroad, for example, to cover the Crimean War. After an industrial dispute shut *The Times* down for almost a year in 1978-79, it was bought out by Australian media tycoon, Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch's new management style led to claims by some staff that *The Times* was going downmarket, losing its long-held reputation as Britain's newspaper of record. Whether or not these claims have validity, recent figures show that *The Times* retains the highest number of upper income readers of any UK paper and is the UK's leading daily newspaper for businesspeople. Although its daily circulation of 657,301 means it is well below popular tabloids, *The Times* has more full rate sales than any other 'broadsheet'.<sup>14</sup>

The two broadcasters, the BBC in Britain and ABC in America, were chosen based on their positions as very wide-reaching and perceived 'neutral' broadcasters in their respective countries. Although the BBC has recently gained a questionable reputation as being 'anti-war' regarding British and American involvement in Iraq, it has been routinely recognised for its independence and perceived objectivity throughout its history. ABC, unlike Fox News and some of its recent competitors in the US, has also maintained a reputation for more 'factual', rather than editorial, styles of news presentation, most obvious recently during the US invasion of Iraq. BBC news has worldwide reach and is world-renowned for its international news coverage. On the national circuit, its services are used by ninety percent of the UK population every week.<sup>15</sup> Since its early days as a wireless broadcaster in 1925, the BBC has positioned itself as an independent provider of educational, informational and entertainment programming, allegedly free from political interference and commercial pressure. In 1932 and 1943 respectively, the BBC radio set up its Empire (later World) Service and War Reporting Unit. The importance of international coverage continued after World War II, when BBC television services were developed. BBC has also been a pioneer in

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<sup>14</sup> Circulation listed is for September 2006-February 2007 period. *The Times* Media site, [www.timesmediaadvertising.com/ourbrands/times/thetimes.aspx](http://www.timesmediaadvertising.com/ourbrands/times/thetimes.aspx) (accessed March 27, 2007). *The Daily Telegraph* has a higher circulation rate than *The Times*, but only due to discounted subscription rates.

<sup>15</sup> See [www.bbc.co.uk/info/purpose](http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/purpose) (accessed March 20, 2007).

broadcasting in foreign languages; it already produced stories in forty different languages by WWII.<sup>16</sup>

ABC was also created in an attempt to make media programming more 'objective' and independent although, unlike the BBC, it has always been a private media enterprise dependent on advertising for its existence. "ABC grew out of a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 'monopoly' probe. The 1938-41 radio-network investigation...cited several problems with CBS and NBC, the two then-existing radio networks."<sup>17</sup> A new station, the American Broadcasting Company, was born out of the separation of two NBC stations in 1943. In the 1950s world of rapid television development, however, ABC survived by making careful strategic partnerships with other large businesses such as United Paramount Theatres and the Disney companies. This business manoeuvring eventually resulted in a takeover by Capital Cities Communication in 1986 and the biggest media merger to that date when Capital Cities/ABC was acquired by Walt Disney Co. for \$19 billion in 1995. This merger sparked a flurry of other buy-ups in entertainment stock and was part of a trend towards more globalised, conglomerated media organisations.

Recently, ABC, along with other older media networks such as NBC and CBS, has been challenged by the emergence of specialty cable networks. Although newer specialty information channels and networks such as CNN, MSNBC and Fox have moved throughout the 1990s to usurp much of the traditional power and audiences of the old networks, many of these new options were not in existence at the time of the Somalia intervention. Acquiring footage from newer, influential stations that were in existence, such as CNN, is very difficult until the late 1990s and the start of the twenty-first century. The time period of the Somalia case study has therefore limited choice in terms of broadcasters as well as the availability of archived resources. In the case of the Fallujah study, as will be described in further depth later, time and financial constraints meant that a variety of British and American newspaper and American television

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<sup>16</sup> See [www.bbc.co.uk/heritage/story/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/heritage/story/index.shtml) (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> See [www.museum.tv/archives/etv/A/htmlA/americanbroa/americanbroa.htm](http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/A/htmlA/americanbroa/americanbroa.htm) (accessed March 20, 2007). This website is the source of all further information in this paragraph on ABC.

coverage was analysed in smaller amounts and for a shorter time period than in the Somalia case.

Despite some inevitable constraints, media sources have been chosen with the goal of analysing the output of organisations that are explicit in their commitments to reporting events at a global scale and to publishing a plurality of opinions and ways of understanding world events. The importance placed in Western media on gathering news from a 'plurality' of sources is often linked to the achievement of greater depths of knowledge and 'truth', which are strongly influential concepts in Western societies where, in Foucault's terms, knowledge is power. Importantly, 'plurality' has also been linked to more explicitly universal moral ideals of 'fairness', where all voices and opinions will be heard. I deemed it important to evaluate the existence of 'plurality' in media organisations which have the reputation of holding this concept as a goal, rather than investigating the output of tabloid newspapers and television networks which, although they may claim 'accuracy' and 'objectivity', may be seen as less committed to the value of 'plurality'.<sup>18</sup>

### **Methodological Approach and Coverage Trends**

I considered discourse analysis to be a valuable method of approach for this project, which investigates the political and cultural strategies of hegemonic discourses that attempt to constitute, explain and dominate 'non-Western' people and places through a study of media coverage of recent interventions involving 'the West' and 'others'. Cultural geographer Gillian Rose identifies two generalized types of discourse analysis, both linked to various periods in the research career of Foucault. These types of analysis are differentiated by their focus: the first type is primarily concerned with the analysis of texts and images while the second is more focused on questioning the

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<sup>18</sup> My placing of many of the above terms in quotations indicates my awareness of the strategic and multiple ways in which they are claimed and used in speech by various actors. However, I feel that these terms can and should be explored within specific situations of their use to understand how they are functioning to influence what can be claimed and known.

social institutions responsible for creating such artefacts and bodies of knowledge.<sup>19</sup> This project's work is a blend of Rose's two approaches and closely tied to the later work of Foucault. While individual texts and images are analysed in depth, there is also an effort made to consider the larger institutional conditions in which these texts and images were created and in which they function and circulate. The workings of the Western media as a societal institution is therefore studied as a particular area where power/knowledge is constituted through discourses and the construction of identities, although other societal institutions, such as governments, are also recognised as being key areas where discourses are constructed and contested.

In practical terms, as outlined in depth by Rose, discourse analysis stresses the importance of careful study of particular texts, images and institutions, grouped under specific themes and chosen for their conceptual value and interest. Broad themes in coverage were thus selected through analysis of the media items in each case study, with reference to the background of theoretical literature provided in Chapter One. The primary discourse outlined in this chapter is that of colonial and postcolonial 'development', which is crucially linked to the processes of identity formation whereby a 'West' defines itself against 'others'. This overarching discourse was broken down into themes, which were further developed using textual and visual examples from selected media items. For example, in the case of Somalia, I was particularly interested in understanding how this state was deemed to have 'failed' and what the implications of 'failure' might be for Somalia and its people, discursively and materially. This analysis involved looking at specific collections of words or images associated with the term 'failed states', exploring what subjects and objects were created by this concept, ie. how were people who lived in this 'failed state' represented, and studying how this concept was connected to others.

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<sup>19</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 146. David Howarth argues, in his work *Discourse*, that these periods might be viewed as Foucault's 'archaeological' period (Rose's 'discourse analysis 1') and 'genealogical' period (Rose's discourse analysis 2). See Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 72.

Discourse analysis, as outlined by Rose, may also draw attention to the complexity and contradictions internal to discourses and to absences in particular discourses.<sup>20</sup> Throughout my analysis of media items, I have made efforts to highlight and be aware of these moments, as points where the political aspects of discourses are often particularly clear. The non-appearance of Fallujan citizens in many verbal and visual narratives during the city's siege provides a key example here. Although I discuss large-scale similarities in the themes and strategies used in discourses associated with Fallujah in comparison with Somalia, the uniqueness of context and terms is important to note and no attempt was made to force textual and visual samples of Fallujah coverage into the thematic categories used for analysis of the Somalia case.

In order to provide an overall sense of how selected Western media followed events in Somalia and Fallujah, monthly counts of newspaper and television coverage for the roughly two year period in Somalia and the key monthly periods for the Fallujah military actions were established, an activity similar to that undertaken on a shorter time scale for the Somalia case study by Robinson, Mermin, and Livingston and Eachus.<sup>21</sup> It was assumed that focusing on media items from periods of high coverage would roughly coincide with perceived important events in terms of the policies and actions of US, and in the Somalia case also UN, forces.

### *The Somalia case study*

Since Somalia is a very low source of stories and interest regularly in Western media, discovering relative high points of story coverage was a straightforward endeavour, especially within a two year time period.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the BBC offers

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<sup>20</sup> Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 164-165.

<sup>21</sup> See Piers Robinson, "Operation Restore Hope and the Illusion of a News Media Driven Intervention", *Political Studies* 49, 2001: 941-956; Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered", *Political Communication* 12, no. 4, 1995: 413-429 and Jonathan Mermin, "Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy", *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 3, 1997: 385-403.

<sup>22</sup> Creating a media coverage timeline for this case study was possible using Lexis Nexis's search facilities to isolate *The New York Times* and *The Times* of London coverage of Somalia for the years 1992 and 1993. Sourcing of ABC television coverage was undertaken through the Vanderbilt Television News Archive

no such catalogued access to its news programming. BBC coverage, sourced from the British Film Institute, was therefore chosen using the key periods of media interest in Somalia as identified by ABC and newspaper sources to guide the selection of dates to view coverage. The Lexis Nexis archive was searched using the term 'Somalia' for the years 1992 and 1993. Of the articles which appeared, those which used the word in ways which did not relate to the Somalia intervention were discarded. For example, articles were not included if reference to the Somalia intervention only appeared as a single mention in an article that was predominately about another issue, such as the war in Bosnia which occurred within roughly the same time period. Comparisons of these two conflicts were relatively common, however, and often important for setting the context in which the conflict in Somalia was viewed by Western publics. These articles were included when there was any greater attempt, besides a mere mention, to discuss the Somalia intervention in relation to the situation in Bosnia and wider world events.<sup>23</sup>

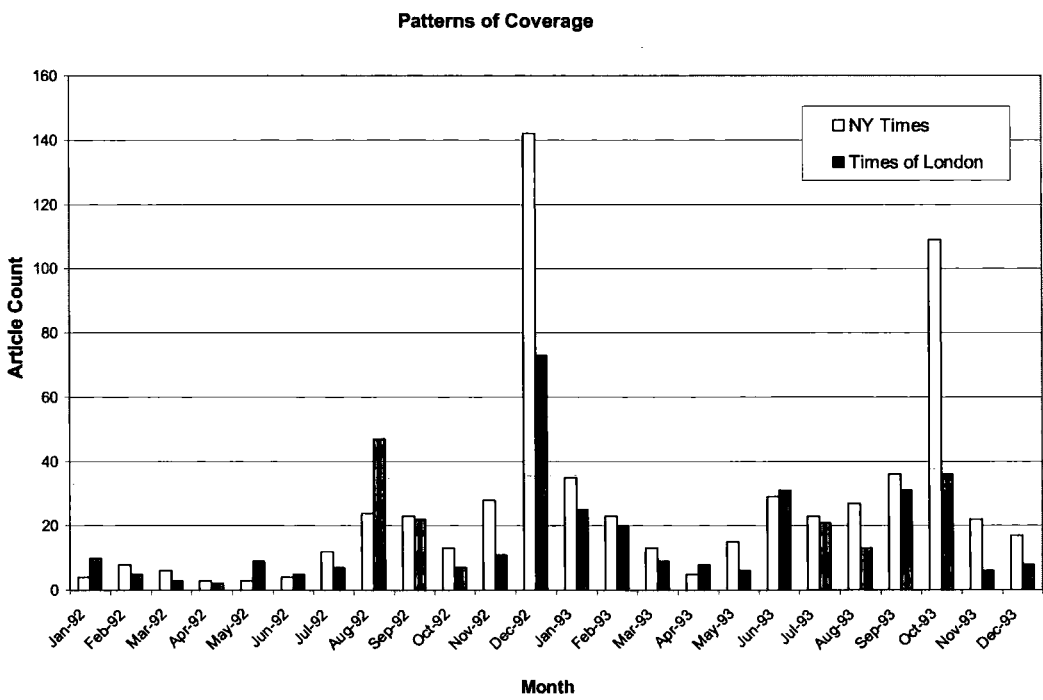
Unsurprisingly, a basic timeline of Somalia media coverage for the years 1992 and 1993 shows that the high points of Western interest in Somalia by far were when US troops entered the country, bringing humanitarian support in December 1992, and following the 'Black Hawk down' events of October 1993. The later stages of the famine, which prompted the intervention of US troops, were heavily covered for less than a month in the press and only a week or so on television. Abruptly, after troops were documented delivering food to the needy, coverage dropped off significantly, leaving audiences largely 'in the dark' about conditions in Somalia until the killing of Pakistani peacekeepers, the subsequent hunt for Aidid and the events of 'Black Hawk down'. Following this final increase in coverage, Somalia dropped out of Western view again, after having been represented in Western media records almost solely as a land

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online. This archive has created a comprehensive catalogue of stories on the nightly news coverage of major US broadcasters, which makes it possible to run keyword searches and identify periods when high levels of Somalia stories were aired.

<sup>23</sup> As will be explained in more depth below with regards to the Fallujah case study, Lexis Nexis creates its own bundles of newspapers which can be keyword searched. I used the 'UK newspapers only' category to search for *Times* coverage and 'US news' category to search for *New York Times* coverage.

of continuous famine and violence. In *The New York Times* coverage, these points were especially obvious. There was increasing coverage of Somalia throughout 1992 from lows of three to eight articles per month from January to June, rising to a range of twelve to twenty-nine articles per month between July and November as news of the famine and warfare in Somalia was spread. December 1992, when American troops were actually sent to Somalia to lead a humanitarian mission there, had the most coverage with 142 articles in the month. In 1993, monthly numbers of articles range from five to thirty-eight, with an average of twenty-eight articles per month. In March, April, May and December, coverage was well below average, ranging from five to seventeen articles, and in October coverage was very high with 109 articles published.



**Figure 1:** Patterns of Coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Times*

*The Times* of London in general carried lower numbers of stories about Somalia throughout the two year period and the pattern of coverage is slightly different. Again, the early months of 1992 were marked by general low coverage; the range was from

two to ten articles per month from January to July. In August 1992, however, there was an upsurge in coverage, with forty-seven articles published. Coverage remained relatively high in September with twenty-two articles published, dropped off for October and November but then predictably increased when American troops intervened in December with seventy-three articles published. In 1993, coverage remained relatively high in January and February- with twenty-five and twenty articles respectively- and then dropped off again until June, when attacks against Pakistani UN peacekeepers took place. After this point, coverage remained roughly consistent through to the 'Black Hawk down' event in October. There were thirty-one articles published in June, twenty-one in July, a drop in August to thirteen and then an increase again to thirty-one in September and thirty-six in October. In a similar fashion to *The New York Times* coverage, article numbers dropped off significantly after 'Black Hawk down' and the announcement of troop withdrawals. November and December 1993 feature six and eight articles respectively, taking coverage back down to levels before the famine was widely discovered by the media in early to mid-1992.

The trends in newspaper coverage are largely mirrored in the television coverage. This is unsurprising given the fact that television networks often select stories to cover based on what major national newspapers are highlighting. Coverage levels for television news do roughly follow the patterns of the newspapers; however, the total number of items tends to be much smaller. While there may be intense coverage for a few days, television coverage appeared to drop much more sharply after an event was perceived as 'over'. This factor can likely be explained by the greater expenses of producing television news compared to newspaper reports. ABC ran eight mentions of the famine and conflict in Somalia during August 1992. One piece was almost five minutes long and was a summary of the 'horrors' in Somalia, followed by a three and a half minute comparison of Bosnia and Somalia. Most television items, however, were between one and three minutes long and focussed on the attempts of the international community, particularly the Americans, to airlift food into Somalia. After some initial interest in the famine, coverage dropped off fairly significantly. ABC ran



five items on Somalia in September 1992 but three of these were barely ten seconds each in length and one just over two minutes. The one lengthy item was a half-hour ABC *Nightline* program, which featured an interview with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on the famine and civil war in Somalia along with a few taped interviews with doctors and nurses working with NGOs in the country. By October 1992 only two items were shown, one twenty seconds long, the other just over three minutes, on the inability of UN troops based in Somalia at that time to prevent the looting of food aid.

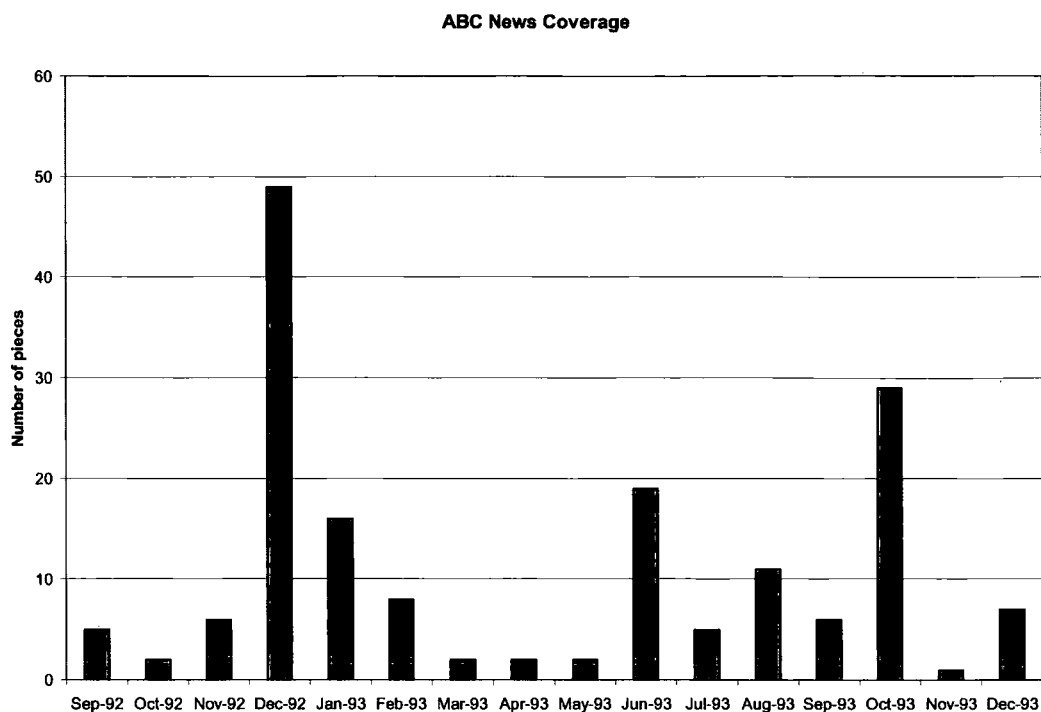
In November 1992, as the possibility of more intense involvement in Somalia began to be discussed after the election victory of Bill Clinton over George Bush Senior, ABC began to provide more substantive coverage. This shift happened quickly in the last week of November. All six items aired by ABC in November were shown during this week and varied between two and six minutes in length, along with a half hour *Nightline* special on possible US military intervention shown on November 30. As news of the intervention was confirmed, planning began and the intervention occurred in December. At this point, coverage rose to its highest levels, with each of the three major networks sending a key anchor to discuss the intervention live in Somalia. ABC aired forty-nine items on Somalia in December 1992; in several cases these were in-depth *Nightline* programs on issues in Somalia and top stories on regular nightly newscasts. On five days in December, half or close to half of the nightly thirty minute ABC news broadcast was devoted solely to stories on the intervention in Somalia. By January 1993, coverage had backed off to sixteen items in the month. The focus of these items is overwhelmingly on the actions and experiences of US troops in Somalia, with mentions made of UN/US-backed attempts at diplomacy with various Somali clan groups.

After January, there is a dramatic decline in reports on Somalia. There were eight items in February 1993, the majority only a minute or two long. In March 1993, three items were shown. A *Nightline* special involved catching up on the current status of the Somalia mission with a group of experts but the other two pieces were a five minute item on a US Army Colonel's personal successes on duty in Somalia and a

twenty second clip on the approval of a UN peacekeeping force to replace the American UNITAF mission. In both April and May, each month featured only two short items.

In early June 1993, Pakistani peacekeepers working for the new UNOSOM II mission were attacked while searching a feeding centre and a weapons storage facility controlled by Mohammed Farah Aidid, one of the major clan leaders claiming a right to rule Somalia. The resulting uproar after these killings became a new story out of Somalia and nineteen items were broadcast during this month. The vast majority describe actions taken by the UN and US against Aidid and his militias in response to the killings. This was followed by another slow period in July, when only five items ran, all but one of them under one minute in length. In August, eleven reports on Somalia were broadcast. The defining event for the coverage here appears to be the killing of four US troops in an ambush blamed on gunmen working for Aidid. This event precipitated more discussion about the UN/US position in Somalia and stories on possible retaliation for the killings. The US government also made the decision to send 400 elite US Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos to Somalia to assist in Aidid's capture and this new output of American forces generated some media interest. By September 1993, however, these elite forces had failed to solve the 'problem' of Aidid as quickly as hoped and the six items aired by ABC during this month outline an increasingly tense situation in Mogadishu. At home, televised discussions with US policymakers indicate an increasing displeasure with the situation and policies of the Somalia mission.

The 'Black Hawk down' events of October 4, 1993 dominate the broadcast coverage of this month; with twenty-nine items shown, this is the second and final high coverage point of the Somalia mission. Of these items, nine were at least thirty minute long *Nightline* or *Headline* shows, which involved televised discussions with policymakers and experts on the direction affairs in Somalia had taken. President Clinton made two televised speeches to outline how he would deal with the aftermath of the events and these speeches generated further media discussion. In the first, detailed airings of the 'Black Hawk down' story, images were shown of dead American



**Figure 2**            **Patterns of ABC News Coverage**

soldiers in various states of undress being dragged through Mogadishu streets by cheering Somali crowds. The airing of these images caused a groundswell of revulsion and anger in the American public, however, and the major networks all appeared to make the decision that these images would not be shown again, at least not on primetime news. Following this choice, there were few 'visuals' to accompany this story, save for the burnt-out military vehicles and scenes of urban combat and destruction that had been the prevailing images of Somalia since at least June 1993. These obstacles in creating a 'visual' story may well have led to decreased television coverage of Somalia, although the 'Black Hawk down' events remained a major source of debate in US political and military circles long after the story left viewers' screens.

After President Clinton's announcement that US troops would be removed from Somalia within a few months, ABC media coverage of the 'failed state' decreased dramatically. Only one item of less than one minute was aired in November 1993. Of the seven items aired in December 1993, most are short and centred around US Defence Secretary Les Aspin's resignation, which related to events in Somalia, and the return to

his home in the US of Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant, the US helicopter pilot captured during the 'Black Hawk down' events by Aidid forces. For the most part, current events in Somalia had been withdrawn completely from the American television imagination.

While viewed BBC nine o'clock news coverage generally appeared to air the same 'newsworthy' events in Somalia as ABC, the only coverage summary that can be given is one based on coverage which was actually chosen to be watched and analysed. On December 4, 1992 news of the US troop deployment to Somalia was the lead story, taking approximately the first six minutes of a thirty minute broadcast. From December 6 to 11, roughly two minute pieces coming in the final half of the thirty or forty minute program appear to be the standard Somalia coverage allocation, with the items tending to update conditions in Somalia and activities of the newly-arrived troops. On June 6, 1993, the killing of Pakistani UN peacekeepers was the lead story on the nine o'clock news. The UN's reprisal attacks on Aidid also feature as a lead story on June 12, as does the shooting of Somali demonstrators by Pakistani troops on June 13. This issue was dealt with quite differently by ABC, which showed images of injured and dead Somali demonstrators but only commented briefly on the fact that these casualties 'allegedly' were caused by the UN. BBC coverage appears to reflect more on the overall UN mission and speculates on the direction in which the anti-Aidid attacks are taking it.

The 'Black Hawk down' events in October were covered in a fairly similar way to ABC but did not remain a large part of nightly news broadcasts for as long. On October 5, 1993, when the controversial images of dead American soldiers were shown, the story was already only two minutes long and was covered in the second half of a thirty minute broadcast. By October 7, the nine o'clock news did not contain any stories on the 'Black Hawk down' events, although questions surrounding UN and US policy responses to the disaster began to make the first half of the thirty minute program in the form of roughly two minute items on October 10 and 14, 1993.

After organising the television coverage so as to be able to recognise and highlight key periods of media activity and interest in the Somalia intervention, more detailed analysis was undertaken of items around the key time periods of December 1992, June 1993 and October 1993. With the newspaper coverage, these periods remain only a guideline and important or revealing articles from outside these periods are studied as well.

*The Fallujah case study*

As with coverage of the Somalia intervention, Lexis Nexis was used to obtain fairly comprehensive newspaper coverage in the time period of the two sieges of Fallujah in 2004. While the counts below cannot be treated as exact, given that Lexis warns that the availability of newspapers it collects varies, the volume of coverage over specified periods in 2004 indicates that Western media interest in Fallujah followed patterns of American military involvement there.

**Table 1: Lexis Nexis article numbers & CNN items mentioning ‘Fallujah’ or ‘Falluja’**

	UK newspapers only (all major British newspapers)	US news (major newspapers plus some wire services)	CNN coverage (sourced from Vanderbilt Television Archive)
March 2004	59	453	3
April 2004	1324	2264+ *	39
May 2004	494	2042+	6
September 2004	294	1536	# not available
October 2004	883	1696	21
November 2004	1682	2256+	45

\* Lexis Nexis cannot retrieve exact numbers of articles when over 1000 results will be produced from a search. In each of these three cases, even fifteen day, rather than monthly searches, produced in excess of 1000 results for at least one half of the month period. Exact figures were not pursued in this case, where the goal is simply to indicate trends in coverage.

As can be seen from the above table, high points in coverage occurred across all media surveyed in April 2004, immediately following the deaths of the contractors on March 31. November 2004, the month of the second siege of Fallujah, is another obvious high point of coverage.

For each monthly search conducted on Lexis Nexis, the search terms 'Falluja' and 'Fallujah' were entered in order to account for different spellings of the city's name across the print media spectrum. The category 'UK newspapers only' is defined by Lexis as containing available articles from all major British newspapers, which encompasses a substantial list of publications. The 'US news' category includes newspapers published in the US, plus wire services where more than sixty percent of stories originate in the US. Data for CNN coverage of the Fallujah events was obtained from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. CNN was particularly chosen because it is the only news source obtained by Vanderbilt which can be streamed electronically, rather than requiring the ordering, production and shipping of videotapes. This procedure, while undertaken for analysis of coverage of the Somalia intervention, was prohibitively expensive in the case of the Fallujah material. Searches of the Vanderbilt database of coverage indicate that of the major American broadcasters whose coverage is obtained by Vanderbilt, including ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN and Fox News, CNN appears to have produced the most news items covering events in Fallujah.

Since comparative purposes were privileged over a focus on specific sources for this chapter, a mixture of British and American newspapers were obtained, rather than a limit of one British and one American newspaper source as was the case for Somalia. While the number of articles uncovered by Lexis Nexis searches indicates that an extremely large amount of newspaper coverage on the events in Fallujah is available, a small range of sources for analysis were selected largely based on their length and the amount of focus devoted to Fallujah. This was judged by the number of times the name 'Fallujah' or 'Falluja' was referred to in the article and through skimming the article

abstracts on Lexis Nexis.<sup>24</sup> Where searches provided a variety of media sources, there was also an attempt made to select articles from different newspapers. British newspaper sources covered by the survey for Fallujah primarily include: *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. American newspaper sources include The Associated Press and *The Washington Post* but analysis was overwhelmingly based on *New York Times* articles.

### **An Ethics of Approach: The Importance of Foucault & Derrida**

The importance of Foucault's work for this project has been described in Chapter One, but warrants re-emphasis before an analysis of media coverage is begun. Although in his later work Foucault moved away from the term 'discourse' and more often discussed 'power/knowledge configurations', his theoretical shift does not put the work of this project at odds with his approach. 'Power/knowledge's inclusion of non-discursive factors, such as societal institutions, in explanations of historical change adds to the depth of analysis possible for this work, stressing the importance of studying not only the content of media outputs but also the interactions and position of the media, along with governments and non-state organisations, as institutions in a broader field of social bodies.

Foucault's final writings on bio-power explore the different ways in which human beings become subjects and, again, were crucial to the theoretical bases on which this work began. According to David Howarth, the "three modes of objectification" by which humans become subjects for Foucault are linked to "the discursive conditions that make knowledge possible", which decentre subjects and recognise our constitution as subjects as crucially tied to "ways of speaking" within various discourses. From this point, Foucault is particularly interested, Howarth explains, in the "dividing practices" by which subjects are internally divided or divided

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<sup>24</sup> When Lexis Nexis searches are viewed, it is possible to see the number of times the search word is mentioned in each retrieved article and article word count is given. This makes it relatively easy to select 'dense' articles for analysis, ones which tend to be longer in length and reference the area of interest most frequently.

from others. Thinking through the social and political processes, particularly discursive ones, by which these dividing processes take place has been the fundamental goal of this project, and has also been of great scholastic importance for those studying colonial and postcolonial relations, whose writings are also key for this work. Finally, Foucault explored the ways in which humans create themselves as subjects “through processes of recognition, self-mastery and transgression”. At this point, Foucault recognises the possible active roles of individuals both to maintain and resist particular strategies of power/knowledge.<sup>25</sup> This idea is in line with statements in this project which affirm the idea that systems of dominance can be made unstable from the inside and, despite appearances, are not permanently fixed entities; there is, therefore, hope for change.

Another necessary element of this project was a constant vigilance to an ethics of approach, which will serve to illustrate the importance of Derrida’s thought for this project, which is largely compatible with its use of Foucault as well. The normative understanding of responsibility taken in this work is heavily indebted to the ethical studies of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, both of whom draw theoretical attention to the possibilities of ‘other’ or alternative narratives, which may be silenced by a dominant or a specific interpretation of an event.<sup>26</sup> This understanding is in line with Derrida’s concept of *differance*, which represents the idea that all identity formation is historical and contingent, as every affirmation of identity is premised on the active deferring of other possibilities.<sup>27</sup> Acknowledgement of and interest in the ‘other’, what is deferred, suggests the presence of a kind of ethics as constitutive of deconstructive approaches. Deconstruction works to question and oppose singular or totalitarian readings of particular texts, events etc. and to illustrate their necessary interdependence.

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<sup>25</sup> Howarth, *Discourse*, 79-81. These pages are the source for these ideas and the direct quotes.

<sup>26</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy”, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Cambridge USA: B. Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> Howarth, *Discourse*, 41.



Motivated by this deconstructive ethics, this project will question the discourses of Somalis, Iraqis and their respective countries that were represented in Western media and explore the existence of power differentials and hegemonic discourses, which contributed to certain stories being told rather than others. This approach aims to open a space in discussion for Somali, Iraqi, non-Western and other alternative accounts of the conflict. There is an absence of Somali and Iraqi voices and views in this work, largely for linguistic and logistical reasons. A large part of the aim of this project, however, is to encourage Western audiences to question narratives of the intervention mediated primarily through Western 'experts' and to become more open to those offered by alternative sources. I began this work with the suspicion that Somali and Iraqi narratives of interventions in their states and the views of dissident 'others' outside of elite policy and media-making circles were not widely heard in mainstream media coverage of both these events. This suspicion was itself questioned by looking at how coverage was presented in American and British media sources with a reputation for plural, 'fair' and balanced approaches to representing issues. The aim was not to create one new account of the Somalia intervention or of incidents in Fallujah in 2004. A central theoretical tenet of this work is that there can be no single 'objective truth' of each situation, which Western media somehow failed to capture.

This project's methodology which, as illustrated in this chapter and Chapter One, is based primarily on deconstructive approaches to texts and discourse analysis, could be used to (re)explore a variety of past and current intervention case studies. It should not, however, be considered a universalist approach, as deconstructive readings have consistently challenged traditional Western natural and social science methodologies that privilege a particular style of research claiming to be 'objective', 'parsimonious' and 'reproducible'. Although a deconstructive/discursive method may be used in a variety of situations, particular cases, such as the Somalia intervention and events in Fallujah in 2004, are unique and any broader lessons or themes emerging from both case studies must be carefully drawn rather than assumed.

The goal of this chapter has been to continue the trajectory through Chapter One. I have now moved from discussing broad theoretical influences for this work, through more targeted and specialised studies, to describe the research processes used for this single, particular project. By explaining and justifying the research choices and strategies used for the project in this chapter, following, content-rich chapters will be able to focus almost exclusively on exploring dominant narrative and visual representations of the Somalia intervention and Fallujah in 2004. The next chapter, which marks an end to the first half of the project, will turn to the meeting of Western, and non-Western, politics and social structures in the physical and cultural geographic space of 'Somalia'. This final background chapter, "Somalia: Past Policy and the Political Landscape", will provide readers with some sense of existing Western knowledge of Somalia in the early 1990s, at the time when Somalia's civil war and humanitarian difficulties were recognised by parts of the West. As will become evident throughout this chapter, Western knowledge of the Somali Horn region was limited and concentrated in a few academic and policy-specific sectors. Those with specialised and local knowledge, and the voices of Somali citizens themselves, are rarely heard in analysed Western media coverage, where sources for quotable material are often political officials and relief workers. Providing a history of Somalia, albeit a brief and incomplete one, particularly around the time of the intervention, is also an attempt to give readers some basis of evaluating what selected media coverage provided and what it left out.

## Chapter Three – Somalia: Past Policy & the Political Landscape

When Somalia first started to appear on the screens and pages of Western news sources, many citizens of the US and UK had probably never heard of the country before. Somalia had fluctuated from a Cold War enemy to an ally of the West before the civil war and intervention of the early 1990s, but much Western involvement with the state occurred without significant media interest. Even when Somalia is known of in Western societies, its history is primarily understood through narratives of Somali peoples' interaction with the West as interpreted by Westerners, whether it be during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, throughout the Cold War, or in the 'New World Order' of the present. This chapter will focus on this particular body of literature, that which is predominately available for those in the West who wish to understand Somalia more fully. While there are some notable examples of Somali intellectuals, musicians, poets and novelists representing their region and society, general levels of scholarship on Somalia are low in comparison to many other African countries; studies are still often undertaken by Westerners. These factors suggest that there would be benefit in Somalis producing their own accounts of their country's history and culture for the outside world.

This chapter will examine academic and policy-oriented research on Somalia with a particular focus on the period of the UN/US intervention although it will follow a chronological timeline in order to situate the intervention activities within a larger period of Somali history. Studies of Somali societal and cultural structures will be of particular interest in order to uncover the ways in which general Western understandings have been formed about the Somali 'character' and Somali capabilities for self-governance. As will be seen later, these interpretations often found their way into media discourses about Somalia and Somali people. While there have been attempts throughout Somalia's history to represent the complexity of its society, many narratives of Somalis, which emerged in academic, policymaking and popular areas



during and after the civil war and interventions, functioned to simplify and close down multi-faceted explanations for why the state had 'failed'. For example, the following comment appeared on the first two pages of an analytical work on the intervention:

Somalis are possessed of a racist psychology- with inferiority complexes...It is fair to say that their Arab-African schizophrenia makes Somalis tend to disdain everyone but themselves. Although their evolved homogeneity has imbued the Somalis abstractly with a sense of common heritage and destiny, it now manifests itself merely as exclusion and not as unity. With one another, Somalis are distinctly callous.<sup>1</sup>

While it is a more extreme example, this quote hints at the pessimistic and stereotyped views held by many of Somalia's supposed 'saviours' regarding those they had gone to aid. Such representations permeated important parts of the debate on approaches to engaging with Somalia; they had an impact on the ways in which problems in the country were conceptualized and approached. A strong underlying assumption that Somalis themselves did not possess the capabilities to find peaceful resolutions to their conflict meant that several international attempts to aid Somalis took a top-down, directive approach, in which Somalis themselves often had little say. Media coverage of the conflict and intervention tended to follow and, in some cases, exacerbate these trends by focusing extensively on the discourses presented to them by American and UN officials and international aid personnel.

Due to a lack of resources and linguistic skills, this chapter will not present the intervention story from the perspectives of Somalis who lived through it, although these voices need to be heard. It will instead provide readers with a background on how Somalis have been historically understood by primarily Western specialists and discuss problems and debates during the intervention period in Somalia which are not represented in depth in much media coverage of this period. The limited number of authors, primarily anthropologists, who are cited in this chapter again highlights the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 1-2.

scarcity of academic work being done on Somalia and its people, or at least the minimal amount available to Western researchers. Nonetheless, bringing even a limited knowledge of this country and its people to media coverage of Somalia in Chapters Four and Five will enable readers to reflect more deeply on analysed media coverage.

### **'Traditional' Somali Society & Customs**

Most academic commentators on Somali history have presented life in the Horn of Africa region as characterized by fluidity, rather than stability, and this factor has carried into issues regarding national borders and political organisation. According to John Drysdale, one of few Western Somali-language speakers and a long-term researcher of the region, the loose boundaries of a 'greater Somalia' included parts of northern Kenya, eastern Ethiopia and what is now Djibouti. These boundaries were determined by conquests undertaken by various Somali-identifying groups and by the limits of fertile pasture areas over 200 years before Somalia's official creation as a nation-state.<sup>2</sup> When Drysdale wrote in the early 1960s, he estimated that eighty percent of the Somali population were nomadic pastoralists.<sup>3</sup> Their movements between inland grazing areas and the wells of mainly coastal towns and cities were dictated by the arid climate interspersed with brief wet seasons, the climactic norm for much of the Somali Horn region.

More recent work by David Laitin and Said Samatar appears to confirm the enduring character of this lifestyle. Laitin and Samatar's 1987 work indicates that at this time, shortly before the outbreak of the 1990s civil war, two-thirds of Somalia's population continued to migrate seasonally and live by animal husbandry.<sup>4</sup> These figures are challenged, however, by Maria Brons, who quotes figures from 1983 to argue that only 52.5% of Somalia's population were nomads at this time, with 19.9%

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<sup>2</sup> John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1964), 7. Drysdale is a renowned anthropologist who spent considerable time in Somalia and speaks the Somali language. He was brought back to the country during the 1992-93 UN/US intervention in an attempt to help with negotiations.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>4</sup> David Laitin & Said Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 22.

being settled farmers and 27.6% being non-agricultural. Brons also mentions figures from 1975 to support her argument that the non-agrarian population of Somalia was increasing during the 1970s and 1980s as nomadic and farming populations steadily decreased.<sup>5</sup> Debates over these figures have important implications, given the strong emphasis on pastoral life in many studies of Somalia and its perceived significance for Somali 'clan' identity creation.

Scarcity of good pasture and watering holes has meant that relations have often been strained and prone to shifts between various Somali herding groups, as well as with neighboring cultures such as Abyssinian Christian groups in what is now Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup> Within Somali society, extended family and clan affiliations became important for negotiating these competitive conditions in both peaceful and violent ways as well as for divisions of labour. Clan membership is thus described as facilitating natural resource allocation as well as providing support for individuals during frequent scarce seasons; droughts during winter months were common. While conflicts did occur, cooperation was also crucial for surviving in such an environment. Somali shared beliefs are said to prioritize the characteristics of fortitude and generosity towards others. These values, along with detailed genealogies of a group's lineage and history, were transmitted orally, primarily through forms of memorized alliterative poetry. Up to the present, oral traditions remain dominant in Somalia. A written version of the Somali language was only created in 1972 and radio stations remain a fundamental means by which information is shared since only thirty percent of the Somali population is estimated to be literate.<sup>7</sup> This number is expected to have fallen

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<sup>5</sup> Maria H. Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State: Somalia From Statelessness to Statelessness?* (Utrecht: International Books, 2001), 76.

<sup>6</sup> Laitin & Samatar mention frequent battles between Muslim Somali groups, who began adopting the Islamic faith around 1000 AD after encounters with travelling Arab religious figures, and Abyssinian groups between 1100 and 1500 AD. See Laitin & Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> See Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, 10-17 and Laitin & Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, 31-36 & 65.

since the 1980s due to the destruction of state-organised educational systems during years of conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the undeniable importance of clan affiliations for Somali life throughout the nation's history, most Somalia researchers suggest that these relationships can, and often are, overstated or misunderstood. Drysdale suggests that the Somali social system is very fluid and can allow for both family and individual independence from clans as well as tight clan and national allegiances.<sup>9</sup> The population of the entire Somali nation, which often unites itself through claims of having a common ethnic origin, language and religion, has always be difficult to calculate but was estimated to be about six to six and a half million in 1996, with an additional two and a half to three million in other countries.<sup>10</sup> Larger Somali clan groups, such as the *Darod*, may have millions of members while sub-clan groupings and patrilineal ties can decrease to the level of only tens. Perceptions of distinctiveness between these groupings are developed through shared narratives of history and regular interactions. They can and have been both politically exaggerated and obscured.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the migratory style of many Somalis' lives, centralized systems of governance have remained incredibly difficult and impractical to create and develop. Historically, Somalis employed forms of very direct, small-group democracy. Group decisions tended to be made communally and any man deemed to have reached maturity could participate, although elders' opinions tended to carry the greatest weight. When decisions and negotiations needed to be reached among larger groups, for example at an inter-clan level, meetings of the involved clans were held. These

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<sup>8</sup> Alice Bettis Hashim, *The Fallen State: Dissonance, Dictatorship and Death in Somalia* (Lanham: University Press of America Inc., 1997), 125.

<sup>9</sup> A Somali proverb is often used to illustrate the possible shifting nature of Somali alliances, albeit in a predominantly negative light: "Me and my clan against the world; Me and my family against my clan; Me and my brother against my family; Me against my brother." Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At war in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 74. Like many Somali statistics, this figure varies considerably depending upon how Somalis in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya are counted. Since the breakdown of the state, collecting accurate population counts and other statistics has been very difficult.

<sup>11</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 29-30. With specific reference to the 1990s and the time of the intervention see the work of Catherine Besteman.

types of meetings were held in an ad hoc, as-needed manner rather than conforming to a centralized or regularized schedule.<sup>12</sup> Across Somali society basic tenets of justice held, comprising a mixture of Islamic and more localized rules of law, and were based on material rather than moral compensation. The responsibility for compensation payment (*diya*) was shared by a communal or family *diya*-paying group, which could be joined by both families and individuals and was not necessarily made up of the same members as an individual's herding group.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, clan divides have been challenged by intermarriage among different clans, although this practice was more common before the 1990s civil war than after it. Traditionally, women, along with elders and religious figures, have played a role in narrowing clan differences.<sup>14</sup>

These descriptions of Somali life and customs are contrasted by Jonathan Stevenson's account from shortly after the end of the intervention. As a professor of Strategic Studies at the US Naval War College, Stevenson likely has influence at least within the American military community and perhaps further in policymaking and media circles. Stevenson portrays Somali behaviour and social structures as largely unchanged from distant history to present and reads particular cultural trends in a distinctly negative light:

There is practically no such thing as a Somali patriot or a Somali nationalist. By tradition Somali nomads are self-sufficient...To the extent that they are politically motivated at all, these willing expatriates move abroad and angle for profit in the interest not of their country but of their clan...Clans are extended patrilineal networks that go back several hundred years- not terribly different from the Hatfields and McCoys of Appalachian legend. The clan system- which stresses segmentation over community- developed not out of any affirmative desire for interdependence or religious solidarity but rather out of a reluctant need to bolster the individual...Property was defined not by

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<sup>12</sup> I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 2002), 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, 19-21. Also see Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 100 & 125 and Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 108.



legal ownership but simply by occupation, and no particular moral stigma attached to theft or even murder.<sup>15</sup>

While he later criticizes American interveners for their failure to learn more about Somali history and culture before becoming involved in the country, Stevenson proposes a limited and pessimistic view of Somalis. Here, the roots of Somalia's discord appear to trace back to primeval Somali traits of selfish individualism, profiteering and a lack of morality. Clan and legal structures for settled disputes and resolving issues such as theft go unmentioned, and clans are linked to retrogressive social groups in the US, rather than having any of their communal or supportive roles acknowledged. The clan system becomes representative of fundamentally-applied Somali character stereotypes. Elements of Stevenson's representations will later be recognizable in some media coverage of Somalia, although it is obviously different from other academic understandings outlined here.

Recent Somalia researchers in particular have highlighted an important minority, and perhaps at present even a majority, of Somalis who have not followed a nomadic pastoralist lifestyle and have interpreted some facets of clan relations differently to nomadic Somalis. Although they are often omitted from generalized descriptions of Somalia's population, these groups have existed throughout the country's history. Traditionally, the people of Somalia are said to come from two main lineage groups, the *Samale* and the *Sab*. The differences between these two broad groupings were said to be reflected in their productive lifestyles. Primarily living in north and central Somalia, the *Samales* were the dominant, nomadic pastoral group, whereas the *Sab* tended to be settled agriculturalists clustered around one of the few fertile areas of southern Somalia, the inter-riverine valley between the Shabelle and Juba rivers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 6-7. Lewis interprets *Sab* differently than Brons. While the *Rahanweyn*, *Digil* and *Mirifle* clans are viewed as *Sab* clans, *Sab* also means those who fulfill tasks degrading to nomads such as hunting, leather and metal working and haircutting- jobs common in ex-slave groups. Those *Sab* who undertake these jobs are said by Lewis to comprise only a "minute fraction" of the total

Complicating factors to this broad distinction are found in the diverse relations that *Sab* clans have had with large numbers of enslaved peoples from various parts of East Africa who arrived in southern Somalia at several historical points. Former slave groups were sometimes re-enslaved by the local Somali populations or could also be adopted into their clans or live as neighbors to them. Islamic law stated that slaves who converted to Islam should be manumitted and permitted to live free in these communities. Catherine Besteman, I. M. Lewis and other researchers explain, however, that the ancestors of these slave groups are still said to manifest physical features that reveal their *Bantu* ancestry, despite the fact that almost all of them learned to speak Somali, practice Islam and have affiliated with a Somali clan. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with colonial support, there was a solidifying of racialized constructions of the *Bantus* as distinct and inferior to 'pure' Somalis which further encouraged discrimination against them in myriad ways including placement at the bottom of any clan allegiance system they joined. On a broader scale, agriculturally-focused clans were also looked down upon, as farming was seen as an inferior pursuit to herding.<sup>17</sup>

Brons also cites Lewis on linguistic differences between the *Maxaa* Somali of the *Samale* and the *Maay-maay* Somali of the *Sab*, which are apparently as significant as the differences between Spanish and Portuguese rather than being merely dialectical.<sup>18</sup> Besteman adds that the famous Siad Barre literacy program of the early 1970s taught only the new written version of 'standard' Somali, which was the *Maxaa* version and became the official state language, thereby alienating those who spoke *Sab Maay-maay* Somali.<sup>19</sup> While ethnic homogeneity has often been idealized by both Somali and non-Somali commentators as a key positive force for Somali unity, Brons and Besteman argue extensively that there have always been a variety of cleavages that co-exist with

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Somali population and at present the enfranchisement of these groups (the *Midgans*, *Tumals* and *Yibirs*) is said to be far advanced (Lewis, 10).

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Besteman, "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia", *Cultural Anthropology* 11, No. 1 (February 1996): 124.

<sup>18</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 99-102.

<sup>19</sup> Besteman, "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia", 125.

clan distinctions in Somali society, such as those of perceived racial background and economic occupation. Once Somalia was given independence and a central Somali government, dominated by pastoralists, was created, this situation became more politically significant.

Beyond the perceived racial and livelihood differences outlined above, other factors distinguish the existences of settled and nomadic Somali groups which continue to have relevance to present day. While nomadic Somalis are said to have relied on series of clan and elders' meetings outlined above, settled Somalis apparently put less emphasis on clan politics and relied more upon their neighbors during times of need.<sup>20</sup> Because of their sedentary nature, agricultural groups tended to establish more permanent and class-based structures of governance than did nomads.<sup>21</sup> This is generally the explanation given for why the two major *Sab* or *Rahanweyn* clans, the *Digil* and the *Mirifle*,<sup>22</sup> suffered a disproportionate number of deaths during the 1990s famine. After their farmlands and villages had been destroyed and their populations dispersed by a combination of conflict and drought, these groups had little in the way of larger clan structures upon which to depend in this difficult period.<sup>23</sup> During the 1990s war, many clan groups were dislocated from their traditional regions and occupations. Some made attempts to grab valuable land, especially around the ports of major cities like Mogadishu and Kismayo and in the inter-riverine area. This economic situation provides another explanation for why fighting in Somalia's farming region was intense and often deadly for locals.

In many ways, the new insecurities caused by the breakdown of the central Somali state have re-created a greater need for the clan system in present-day Somali

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<sup>20</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 120-125.

<sup>21</sup> Besteman's work suggests that clan membership itself was far more fluid in southern, agricultural regions. "People switch clan affiliation for protection, for marriage, for grazing or land rights, for labor, for political reasons- or for other personal reasons. The process of affiliating with a clan other than the one into which a person was born is quick and easy in the south, and is not necessarily permanent." Besteman, "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia", 124.

<sup>22</sup> The term *Rahanweyn* is sometimes used as an overarching category for two sub-groups- the *Digil* and *Mirifle* but is also sometimes considered to be one of two major *Sab* clans, labelled the *Rahanweyn* and *Digil*.

<sup>23</sup> John Prendergast, *Crisis Response: Humanitarian Band-Aids in Sudan and Somalia* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 115-116 & 124-125.

life than may have existed during the Barre years or before. The agricultural clans and groups of the south have historically claimed to face discrimination and disadvantage. Their lower levels of involvement in the military effort to overthrow Barre meant that, at least in the early civil war years, they were not well-prepared to assert with force their rights to their land and safety in the anarchic situation that followed the toppling of the Barre regime. This overthrow was primarily undertaken by sub-groups within the historically nomadic clans. The gradual and then rapid collapse of the Barre dictatorship during the 1980s meant that many Somalis who had urbanized during the 1960s and 1970s, moving from traditional economic pursuits to supposedly more secure work in administration for the government in Mogadishu, were left jobless. These citizens, out of necessity, often turned for support to extended family and friends from within their clan.<sup>24</sup>

The research presented in this section thus suggests that a prevalent representation of Somalis as nomadic herders has both traditionally and currently overlooked the existence of other societal groups. A number of Somalia researchers view racial, class and external factors as being important in contributing to conflict in the country as well as clans. Importantly, the relevance of all these factors has shifted historically due to political, economic and social conditions, rather than being primordially determined, as much media coverage implied. In order to understand the ways in which Somalia's socio-economic and political collapse was facilitated, it is important to look at the ways in which colonialism and the independent Somali state which followed have affected various Somalis in diverse ways. The broad research support illustrated in this section for viewing Somali clans and social structures as more fluid and complex than they are generally described during the 1990s intervention is significant for analysing later media and policymaker representations.

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<sup>24</sup> This situation is discussed by several authors including Brons, Besteman and Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: the Impact of the Colonial Legacy* (London: HAAN Publishing, 1996), 138-139.

## The Colonial Era

The colonial era marked the start of a new set of relationships between diverse Somali groups and a variety of colonising powers. Britain, France and Italy all staked claim to various parts of the Somali region and carved the territory amongst themselves, imposing their own versions of political and economic rule with little or no thought given to existing Somali social and migratory patterns. Britain annexed northern Somalia, now known as Somaliland, and signed treaties with the regional majority *Isaaq* clan. France claimed the northwestern corner of Somalia, now Djibouti, while the Italians took areas in the south of the country and were particularly interested in creating large farming plantations in the fertile areas.<sup>25</sup> The Christian empire of Ethiopia used this period to push for its own territorial gains in the Ogaden and Haud regions, two important grazing areas on what was to become a highly contested border between the two countries. Somali land was thus divided among outside forces with little regard for the ways in which these new borders split clan groups and resource access in ways that created antagonism between neighboring groups.<sup>26</sup>

While these new divisions did cause increased levels of violence and competition amongst Somalis, Laitin and Samatar suggest that they also created an impetus for emerging Somali nationalism based on united opposition to arbitrary and unrepresentative colonial control.<sup>27</sup> The so-called 'Mad Mullah' Sayyid Mohammad began his nationalistic attempts to unify a number of Somali clans in 1895, principally to fight Ethiopian pillaging of lands perceived to be Somali, but he also coordinated Somali attacks against European colonisers for over twenty years.<sup>28</sup> In the Italian-run south, Somalis violently revolted against their employment as little more than slave

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<sup>25</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 48 and Paolo Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia: Rome and Mogadishu from Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope* (Basingstoke UK: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), 26-29.

<sup>26</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Laitin & Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> This anticolonial rebellion survived four major British military expeditions and the first use of air strikes in colonial Africa. It collapsed when the 'Mad Mullah' died of influenza in 1920 in a remote *Ogaden* village. James Mayall ed., *The New Interventionism 1991-1994: United Nations experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Somalia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 102.

labor on various colonially-run farms.<sup>29</sup> Sayyid Mohammad was later taken up by Siad Barre as an example of a national hero who had united the Somali people against outside invaders. While some authors seem to support his idea that these rebellions were important for fostering initial feelings of pan-Somalism, Brons suggests that the experiences of Somali groups in the nomadic north and the primarily agricultural south were very different and would not necessarily have been relatable in ways that would create strong nationalist feelings.<sup>30</sup>

The British had little interest in Somalia beyond its strategic location at the meeting point of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, which was important both militarily and for trade. The northern Somali economy was therefore geared overwhelmingly towards supplying the nearby British port city of Aden with fresh food, with very little funding being placed into alternative occupations, infrastructure, education or governance training for local elites.<sup>31</sup> A trade deficit also began which has continued and worsened to present day. Colonial investment in Somalia remained comparatively very low, which meant that indigenous Somalis bore the full force of these negative outcomes with little or no assistance.<sup>32</sup>

As they tired of expending military resources in this comparatively unproductive colony, the British began a period of *détente* in their border skirmishes with the Ethiopians and set upon a process of boundary negotiation, conducted largely without Somali input. Alice Bettis Hashim describes the disastrous effects of these negotiations for Somalis; they resulted in an 1897 treaty which ceded both the Ogaden and the rich grazing area of the Haud to Ethiopia, destabilizing the grazing practices of at least five major Somali clan groups. Britain sought to maintain a balance of power in Africa and, according to Hashim, favoured maintaining the greater strength of Somalia's neighbors, Kenya and Ethiopia, over the well-being of Somalia's people.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 139-141.

<sup>31</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 51 and Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 51-52.

Conditions in southern Somalia, under Italian rule, were little better. Italy established a monopoly over exports, customs and tariff regulations which had a highly negative impact on urban Somali business and trading communities around Mogadishu. Although the Italian government was initially in favour of the abolition of slavery on southern Somali plantations in the late 1800s, conditions of near-slavery continued without much change and were actively encouraged during the Fascist period. The colonial practices of both the British and the Italians also aided in the official establishment of discrimination based on racial features, with those claiming Arab origins labelled 'non-slave' and 'non-farmers' while *Sab* groups faced increased hardship and even less freedom. The *kolonya* system, which was established during the 1920s, involved the expropriation of high quality land from villages with no compensation and the forced relocation of villagers onto plantation sites. It was only after southern Somalia was established as a UN protectorate in 1950 that coercion of labour and land expropriation were banned and small-scale subsistence farming based around villages was re-established.<sup>34</sup>

Southern Somalia was administered by Italy as a UN protectorate from 1950-1960 in an attempt to prepare it for independence. Britain attempted to match the transfer to self-governance of the northern Somaliland Protectorate to that of the south, with the goal of seeing the two sectors unified as soon as possible in 1960. There was much work to be done in creating a single state system into which two very different styles of colonial administration, British in the north and Italian in the south, could be integrated. Prototype Somali political parties began to be formed among the young and educated minority as early as the 1920s and the creation of these parties increased in pace as the date of independence neared. Most of these parties were tied to specific clan groups so parties representing clans such as the *Darod*, who were widely-spaced across Somali territory, had some advantage in representation. Already the primary goal of many of these parties was to unify all Somali peoples in French Somaliland

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<sup>34</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 147-149. Issa-Salwe also provides a description of life for Somalis under Italian colonialism in *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 52-53.

(now Djibouti), Ethiopia, Kenya, British and Italian Somalilands.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, however, political groups representing settled, agricultural communities such as the *Rahanweyn Digil* and *Mirifle* pushed for the protectorate state to be kept in place for thirty rather than ten years, hinting at their fears that the future Somali state would be dominated by nomadic groups who might consider the inhabitants of their communities to be 'lesser' Somalis.<sup>36</sup>

Such studies of Somalia's colonial political economy help to complicate assertions made by commentators such as Stevenson, who suggest that Somalia's economic difficulties are merely one more manifestation of its general primitive and "Darwinian" situation: "Even in peacetime, the Somali economy has no margin. Three-quarters of the population remained vagrant nomads and lived at the subsistence level on camels, sheep, goats and cattle. Cyclical drought produced mass starvation on a regular basis. Somalia has long depended on the permanent presence of foreign relief organizations to feed those its economy could not."<sup>37</sup> While using derogatory terminology to describe Somali survival strategies attuned with the region's climate, this assessment fails to take into account the effects of colonial procedures on the Somali economy. Although hardship due to droughts is acknowledged to have been a historic issue for Somalis, "mass starvation" is not mentioned as a "regular" event by any other Somali commentator surveyed. While offers of foreign relief were often exploited by the Barre regime, the fact that many Somalis survived without state assistance during this regime, and continue to survive almost two decades after the country's move to statelessness and its abandonment by much of the outside world, would seem to challenge such assertions of chronic dependency.

Newly-created central state bodies in independent Somalia posed a challenge to the traditional authority of clan elders and religious leaders to roughly the same extent as the colonial systems upon which they were based. While, in practice and at local levels, elders and religious leaders tended to remain influential, the new Somali judicial

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<sup>35</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 152-153 and Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: US Policy in Somalia*, 7.



system referred to the colonial laws of the British and Italians and only partly provided space for customary and *sharia* laws.<sup>38</sup> The creation of a central Somali army also placed a new, powerful coercive force into the hands of Somalia's state leaders, diminishing the potential for the use of traditional leaders as conflict negotiators. Finally, the colonial period and its ending had done nothing to reduce high levels of social fragmentation in Somali society. If anything, colonialism may have worsened these divisions by supporting racialized hierarchies, by creating greater amounts of environmental and economic insecurity, and through the physical separation of Somali social groups across four distinct states. These colonial legacies would come back to haunt the Somali state throughout its short period of existence.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Somali State, the Cold War & Collapse**

The Somali state's interaction with the outside world appears to be another area of diverse perspectives in the body of literature on Somali history and politics. James Mayall takes a fairly negative view of Somalia's political history, suggesting that Somalia was responsible for destabilizing the Horn region by engaging in violence to take land from its neighbours.<sup>40</sup> Hashim, Brons and several others are much more supportive of the Somali position; they argue that Somalis were drawn into violence because of the unfair colonial divisions of land on the Horn and that neighboring states, especially Ethiopia, were involved in provoking at least some of the fighting.

Brons suggests that from its creation in 1960 there was frustration among northern Somali clans about the concentration of power and governance in Mogadishu and this point is picked up by several other authors.<sup>41</sup> Despite these broad disparities, Somali politicians were careful from the outset of the Somali state project to create coalitions from a variety of clans. This suggests that, despite the creation of a Western-modelled political system, the concept of the clan remained important for recruiting

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<sup>38</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Mayall, *The New Interventionism 1991-1994*, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 162.

support and undertaking social projects. These inter-clan and sub-clan alliances required repayments in the form of jobs, council positions or occasionally direct monetary pay-offs and opportunities spread across clans to keep the peace.

Although this form of power-sharing and coalition-building across clan divides was important and in some ways reminiscent of older forms of Somali governance, as time went on there was also a large amount of personal jockeying for influence and benefits among politicians looking more for their own personal gain than for the interests of their constituents.<sup>42</sup> During the 1969 elections many petitions claimed voting irregularities and there were widespread claims of abuse of power, corruption and nepotism. By 1968, twenty-one percent of the Somali national budget was being put into military spending, allegedly to counter fears of an Ethiopian attack; money was being diverted away from civilian projects to provide this funding.<sup>43</sup> Hashim blames the failure of Somali democracy largely on the proportional representation system which was inherited from Italy, claiming that, in Somalia, the system encouraged self-interested men to present themselves as candidates based on their personal clan lineage.<sup>44</sup> Brons concurs and adds that the marginalization of rural Somalis, southern agriculturalists and northern urban-dwellers from state services such as education, infrastructure, medical and development services, which were concentrated in and around Mogadishu, also increased public disenchantment with the new central state.<sup>45</sup> The political and social climate was therefore set for change in 1969 when President Shirmarke was assassinated. The armed forces swiftly seized power and appointed General Mohamed Siad Barre as Somalia's new President.

The policies that Barre offered initially appeared very enticing to a large portion of the Somali public, already disillusioned with past corruption and lack of services. Barre also commanded one of the most popular elements of the new central Somali state. Through its involvement in public projects such as communal well-digging,

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<sup>42</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 67 and Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 169.

<sup>44</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 77 and Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 74-75.

<sup>45</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 165 and Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia*, 108.

experimental farming and road building and by being a very large public employer, the national army had achieved an important place in Somalia's collective identity immediately after its creation.<sup>46</sup> Barre's speeches emphasized his desire to make Somalia into a 'modern' state, complete with adequate social services to allow all Somalis, nomadic and urban, educated and illiterate, to achieve equal levels of education and opportunity. This guideline involved the development and widespread teaching of the Somali language script and the promotion of self-reliance and pride in the Somali nation. Following a devastating drought in 1974-75, Barre encouraged the resettlement of rural Somalis who began abandoning their pastoral livelihoods for allegedly more secure opportunities. His goal, which was only minimally achieved, was to steer more Somali citizens into farming and fishing co-operatives or into an urban labour-force.<sup>47</sup>

Barre believed that clan cleavages were the most divisive factor in Somali society and vowed to see the clan system dissolved.<sup>48</sup> To assist this process, he created local orientation centres, which were designed to compete with the mosques and lineage associations to foster bonds between Somalis that were not based on clan affiliation.<sup>49</sup> The use of clan names and terminology was also forbidden. While marginally successful, these policies nonetheless failed to dislodge the old and popular customary law and security provisions that existed within clan groups. These traditions existed in tandem with new central programs and merely went underground and not out of existence when there were conflicts between old and new systems.<sup>50</sup>

Brons argues that at least until the late 1970s Barre's policies, whether considered dictatorial and un-Islamic by some segments of society or as positive and unifying by others, were an issue predominately for urban populations. She suggests that it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Barre's leadership became

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<sup>46</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 170 and Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia*, 114.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmed I. Samatar ed., *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 28.

<sup>48</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 173.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 173.

shaky and his counter-insurgency actions were launched, that rural Somali populations began to feel much impact from government policies beyond a few agrarian development schemes.<sup>51</sup> This point is challenged by other commentators, such as Laitin and Samatar, who have a generally more positive view of Barre's early governance; they believe that state institutions had more of an effect on many Somalis' lives than does Brons. Both the extent of Barre's influence on the Somali population, as well as its positive or negative effects for Somalis, are significant points of disagreement amongst commentators.

Shortly after his rise to power, Barre tied his policies to the larger ideological framework of 'scientific socialism'. While some analysts of Somali history have argued that Barre was honestly mounting a revolution against bourgeois liberalism, which was often negatively associated with colonial-era policies and the excesses of the democratic years, others have pointed to the political expediency in this move. The Soviet Union had been pouring money into military spending for Somalia, in the form of both equipment and training, since 1963. Within a few years, Somalia had acquired the fifth largest army in Africa. Barre was not hesitant to make the most of the Cold War conflict in order to improve Somalia's military capacities in relation to other neighboring states and to acquire assistance in infrastructure development within Somalia.<sup>52</sup>

After it declared Cold War neutrality, Somalia seemed to have few other external interests in the 1970s besides the reclamation of the prized Ogaden grazing land and the reunification of the *Ogadeni* Somalis with the rest of their national kinspeople. These feats would require a large amount of external military support. Despite the devastating effects this conflict would have on their country, Hashim argues that most of the Somali public supported this objective: "At the outbreak of hostilities with Ethiopia in late 1977, Barre's popularity soared almost to the level of his

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<sup>51</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 169. Jeffrey Lefebvre comments that "Mogadishu's defense expenditures...rang(ed) between 13.3 and 27.5 percent of the national budget during the period 1967-1984." Jeffrey Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: US Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 32.

coming to power in 1969.”<sup>53</sup> Brons and others tend to counter this view somewhat; they suggest that it was primarily clans with close ties to the *Ogadeni* Somalis who favoured violent action to recapture this land. They argue that many of the northern clans and settled farming communities were frustrated early on by the amount of funding that went towards this struggle at the expense of other development goals.<sup>54</sup>

The beneficial pattern of Soviet aid to the Barre regime continued until 1976, when the Soviets agreed to deliver military aid to Ethiopia as well, following the 1974 end of Emperor Haile Selassie’s rule and the takeover of Soviet-oriented Mengistu Haile Mariam. By 1977, Ethiopia had expelled all American military advisors; their turn to the East raised Soviet hopes of a socialist federation of Somalia, Southern Yemen and Ethiopia. Barre, however, had no interest in seeing Soviet military aid shared between Somalia and Ethiopia; he was tempted to attack the eastern border of Ethiopia in an attempt to take the Ogaden region for Somalia while Ethiopian political structures remained weak and confused. He was already funding the guerrillas of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) to make small attacks across the border. By July, 1977, regular troops from the Somali National Army had joined the war.<sup>55</sup>

Barre was confident that, even if the Soviets stopped supporting him, he could look to the Americans for new sources of backing. In August 1977, he was greatly disappointed to learn that they would not give military support because of Somalia’s irredentist goals. By October of the same year, the Soviet Union had decided to throw all its forces behind Ethiopia. Deserted by both superpowers, Somalia was forced to withdraw from the Ogaden in March 1978. In the end, neither America nor the Soviet Union wished to see international norms of sovereignty and territorial integrity overturned and this ended Somalia’s hopes of reclaiming the Ogaden by force.<sup>56</sup> As Barre scaled down his irredentist rhetoric and agreed to recognize borders with Kenya

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<sup>53</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 185 & 189.

<sup>55</sup> Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, 35.

<sup>56</sup> Laitin & Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, 88; Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 182-183 and Peter Woodward, *US Foreign Policy and the Horn of Africa* (Hampshire UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), 25.

and then Ethiopia in 1984 and 1988 respectively, America increased payments to his faltering regime. As long as Barre stayed within his own borders, they were comfortable to provide support despite increasing internal dissent and human rights abuses.<sup>57</sup>

All commentators agree that the failure of the Ogaden war represented the beginning of a rapid decline in Barre's popularity. As a direct result of the conflict, more than one million refugees, fearing Ethiopian persecution, streamed into Somalia from the Ogaden. Sensing growing public frustration with his failure to win the Ogaden, Barre became increasingly determined to stifle criticism and dissidence. Despite his previous and continuing speeches against 'clannishness', Barre adopted a policy of appeasing the various *Darod* sub-clans. These groups were close to his own family roots and included the *Ogadenis*, since he had already alienated the northern *Isaaq* and *Hawiye* clans, as well as the *Majerteen*.<sup>58</sup> Members of favoured clans began to receive special advantages in business, employment, and education and were assigned a disproportionate number of higher level government posts. In addition to resentment at the new repressive and discriminatory measures undertaken by Barre, many Somali groups were distressed by continued precedence given to central areas of Somalia over northern ones and by the secular tone of the Barre government. Several anti-Barre political groups stressed that their goals included strengthening Somalia's Islamic political ties and turning foreign policy towards other Muslim countries in contrast to what was seen as Barre's excessive focus on the Western and Eastern superpowers.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout the early 1980s, Barre's repressive tactics became more deadly against the northern *Isaaqs* and *Hawiyes*. Clan-related state terrorism was carried out to traumatize the local population in an effort to keep them from supporting rebel groups. Northern cities came under 'special emergency regulations' and were basically taken

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<sup>57</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 184.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 186.

over by state military police.<sup>60</sup> In the economic sector, many government-owned farming, energy and industrial projects were failing under poor management. Consequently, most government-controlled employment opportunities arose in refugee management or the administrative sector. The large, profitable and still privately-controlled livestock and commodity export sectors were primarily the domains of the *Isaaq* and *Hawiye* clans out of Berbera and Mogadishu. In 1983, this export of livestock and related products accounted for about 93.9% of all Somali export earnings.<sup>61</sup> Barre attempted to take control of this trade away from these clans by creating a discriminatory export licensing system. According to several Africa Watch reports cited by Brons, pro-Barre military dealt with the issue at the source, attacking pastoralists and routinely looting their stock.<sup>62</sup>

The situation of southern Somali farming clans is only looked at in depth by Brons, who suggests that these citizens had suffered from the beginning of the Barre regime, when all land was put under state ownership and registration of title became the only legal way to hold land. This procedure meant that control of land use was taken away from traditional local leaders and elders and placed in the hands of centralized and often-absent state controllers. Many long-established farmers from the *Rahanweyn Digil* and *Mirifle* clans did not register their farms because of the prohibitive cost and travel required and because high illiteracy levels made them uncomfortable dealing with bureaucracies. The new system denied farmers the flexibility of using a variety of different land types, insuring them some yield even if one particular water source failed. It also created some situations of insecurity where village 'strongmen', with the necessary connections and resources to register their land, gained power and control over unregistered land users, who were often put to work as wage-labourers.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, macroeconomic conditions in Somalia continued to spiral out of control as Barre clung to power. Inflation reached one hundred percent by 1984

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<sup>60</sup> I. M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*, Lawrenceville US: The Red Sea Press, 1994), 179.

<sup>61</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 191.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 192. This is also discussed in Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 99-100.

<sup>63</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 194-195.

and the IMF stepped in to reschedule a foreign debt which had grown to \$172 million US. Trade deficits were running at \$350 million and the Somali shilling faced seventy percent devaluation. By 1987, over seventy-five percent of government operating budgets in social and economic ministries were funded by foreign assistance and the defense department was estimated to be consuming more than fifty percent of the state budget. Far from being 'self-reliant', Somalia was now accepting large amounts of food aid, making it among the most dependent countries in the 'Third World' at the time. Despite these depressing indicators of severe governmental mismanagement and continued reports of internal human rights abuses, 'security assistance' was provided to Somalia by the US, along with economic aid packages, until the cusp of the civil war. "The 1989 US figure for such aid was given as \$133.5 million in addition to military training and lethal military aid such as rifles and other small weapons."<sup>64</sup>

The *Isaaq* finally revolted against their treatment by the Barre regime in 1988, seizing control of the northern cities of Hargeisa and Burao. Barre responded by sending forces to level the cities and commit wide-scale and severe human rights abuses.<sup>65</sup> Somali military pilots eventually refused to continue bombing civilians and foreign mercenaries had to be brought in. At this point, a Barre-appointed *Ogadeni* military leader, Colonel Omar Jess, refused to enter into the attacks on Hargeisa and turned his forces southwards against Barre himself. He was joined by General Mohammed Farah Aidid, who was later to play a major role in 1990s Somali politics. Various coalitions of clan groups began to demand Barre's resignation and the re-establishment of democratic governance but Barre refused to give up power. A combination of *Isaaq* forces, the *Hawiye* militias of Aidid's *Habr Gedir* clan, *Abgal* followers of Ali Mahdi Mohamed, a prominent Mogadishu businessman, and the *Ogadeni* forces of Omar Jess surrounded Mogadishu in December 1990, forced Barre south into his home *Marehan* clan territory in January 1991, and then eventually out of

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<sup>64</sup> Hashim, *The Fallen State*, 111. The macroeconomic figures for this paragraph can also be found in Hashim, 110-111.

<sup>65</sup> Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State*, 99-100



the Somali state.<sup>66</sup> Jess then settled in the southern city of Kismayo to continue attacks on Barre's loyal son-in-law General Hersi Morgan. Aidid began a power struggle with his former *Abgal* partner, Ali Mahdi while continuing his efforts to drive Barre out of southwestern Somalia. Heavy fighting laid waste to much of central- southern Somalia and Mogadishu, resulting in most of the early, unpublicized famine. The *Isaaq* returned to their northern lands and declared secession to form the as yet unrecognized independent Republic of Somaliland.

There are a variety of opinions on why the Somali state collapsed only thirty years after its creation. An overarching factor, however, would likely be that attempts at centralized governance increased, rather than eased, the insecurity of Somali citizens, which had, in turn, increased during colonial times. In important ways, the democratic and then dictatorial governments in Somalia mimicked structures of colonial rule whereby only small groups profited with regards to trading opportunities, land tenure and access to education, public services and employment despite the Somali state's avowed objective to change this situation. The minimal attempts by government to improve the lives of Somali citizens often conflicted with traditional and trusted forms of self-rule, which several commentators argue were not well enough incorporated into the Somali state. While they were perhaps temporarily roused by the nationalist cause of enlarging Somalia's boundaries to include separated Somali groups, many Somali clans were not interested in risking their country's safety by engaging in warfare and were resentful that such a large proportion of state funds and time were spent in this pursuit.

Despite his declared aims of preventing clan-based politics and policies, Barre himself favoured his own family clans over others. In the last ten years of his regime, he engaged in divide and rule tactics of playing one clan off another in order to maintain his power base, which led to increased inter-clan tensions within the Somali state. Citizen coping strategies to offset the negative effects of many of Barre's

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<sup>66</sup> John L. Hirsch & Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 11.

economic and social policies had typically manifested themselves in renewed reliance on the clan system in areas where this was historically a major part of peoples' lives. As governmental functions became increasingly erratic and even directly violent towards some Somali groups during the 1980s and life in most parts of Somalia became increasingly dangerous, this tendency to turn towards clans was only re-enforced. Somali identification with clans thus varied during the country's history, and was influenced by both internal and international political and economic factors. Rather than being a constant unit for analysing Somali society, clans appear in the above accounts as dynamic, but persistent, elements within the culture, interacting with other factors.

### **The 'Failed State': Somalia Before & During UNOSOM I**

By early 1991, the civil war had begun to centre on Mogadishu. President Siad Barre declared a state of emergency, prompting UN offices in the capital to evacuate. US Marines staged an amphibious rescue of their 272 staff from Mogadishu in late January 1991 when Barre fled Mogadishu and the \$30 million US embassy was left to looters; many other states and relief agencies also left due to dangerous conditions.<sup>67</sup> After Siad Barre was ousted, John Drysdale describes some small-scale efforts to re-start a political process with power-wielding Somalis such as Ali Mahdi and Aidid in Djibouti in the summer of 1991. These efforts, sponsored by Italy, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, received no larger international support and failed.<sup>68</sup> Stevenson suggests that the US made covert efforts to re-start negotiations in October 1991 but these also fell through. The worst fighting between Aidid and Ali Mahdi in Mogadishu occurred in

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<sup>67</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 34 and Jennifer Kay Woofert, "OPSEC v. RTK: Media Restrictions in United Nations Peacekeeping" (Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2000), <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-11272000-114350/unrestricted/jw-modified.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?* (London: HAAN Associates, 1994), 32-33. Hirsch and Oakley suggest that Aidid boycotted these talks because he did not trust the Italians and Egyptians, since they were former Siad Barre supporters. According to Hirsch and Oakley, Ali Mahdi was declared Interim President in July 1991 at a Djibouti conference, see their work, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*.

November 1991; indiscriminate shelling killed thousands of civilians and rendered food supplies to the city insecure.<sup>69</sup>

Mohamoud Afrah, a Somali journalist who remained in Mogadishu throughout the early fighting, notes in his diaries that Somali citizens were already expressing frustration with the emerging 'warlords' at this point, claiming they were as indifferent to ordinary civilians' suffering as Siad Barre had been.<sup>70</sup> The *Habr Gedir* and *Abgal* had turned against one another months previously, but Drysdale claims that Ali Mahdi's self-proclamation as Interim President of Somalia without Aidid's approval in January 1992 reinforced problems between the two groups. Ali Mahdi is alleged to have made such a claim in order to position himself as a useful contact for a brief meeting with UN personnel at this time, despite the fact that his leadership was not widely accepted by many Somalis.<sup>71</sup>

According to journalist Scott Peterson, who spent time in Somalia after the outbreak of civil war, Barre's fleeing army abandoned over forty thousand weapons of various sizes and hundreds of millions of rounds in the capital. These abandoned arms were looted, which resulted in a heavily-armed population and the creation of large gun markets selling weapons at cut-rate prices. While Peterson argues that most Somali citizens deplored this turn to clan-based violence, they had little choice but to arm themselves and seek protection from their clans as all other forms of civil security had broken down.<sup>72</sup> Mogadishu was split along north-south lines between *Abgal* and *Habr Gedir* 'territories' and the Green Line which divided these sectors became a place of frequent skirmishing. With normal trade and economics forced to a halt due to insecurity, looting and stealing became common pursuits. Peterson estimates that over forty distinct bandit groups, not necessarily affiliated with either of the major clans,

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<sup>69</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 35-36. Stevenson also notes that after the US embassy was evacuated, American diplomatic activity in Somalia became based around a building owned by the Conoco oil company, which was used until December 1992. Osman Ato, Aidid's financier, lived next door and was tied to US oil drilling negotiations in Somalia, which were left undeveloped because of increased violence, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Mohamoud M. Afrah, *Mogadishu: A Hell on Earth* (Nairobi: Copos, 1993), 7.

<sup>71</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 39.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda* (New York: Routledge 2001), 16.

came into existence and helped to strip Mogadishu bare, even digging up miles of buried copper and phone wires to sell. Factories and industrial supplies were deconstructed and sold wholesale to businesspeople across the Middle East by wealthy Somalis seeking to flee the country with as much money as possible.<sup>73</sup>

The inter-riverine area, fertile and crucial for Somali internal food production, was also a scene of intense fighting in 1990 and 1991, which devastated farmlands and led to approximately 500 thousand refugees and 500 thousand internally-displaced citizens.<sup>74</sup> In this region, the *Darod* clan of Barre made a stand against the *Hawiye* forces of Aidid; each side wanted to take control of this highly-productive area, which neither group had previously occupied. The *Rahanweyn* farming clans who historically occupied the inter-riverine land are numerically although not territorially among the largest Somali clans. Brons suggests that the disproportionately brutal attacks that were directed at them were likely a strategic move by both the *Darod* and the *Hawiye* to weaken their chances of rising to prominence in any new Somali government.<sup>75</sup>

As attacks and starvation worsened in southern Somalia, many citizens fled to refugee camps on the Kenyan border or into Mogadishu, in hopes of food and protection. Mogadishu itself was periodically starved of food and those with guns and numbers soon created a profitable situation from this humanitarian disaster. The *Habr Gedir* controlled the airport and the harbour and used these holdings as well as their weapons to demand payments and portions of aid, often up to thirty percent, from the very few international relief agencies that continued operating in Somalia. These included the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Save the Children UK, the International Medical Corps and Medecins Sans Frontieres. Ali Mahdi's militias also profited by controlling flows of aid through their sectors of military control. Aid agencies and Somali civilians additionally had to deal with the *moryaans*, unaffiliated

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<sup>73</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 20-21.

<sup>74</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 13.

<sup>75</sup> "Interviews with various Somalis reveal a perception that man-made starvation of the Rewin population in the triangle of death (Beled Weyne, Baidoa, Bardhere), in the most fertile area of Somalia, can be understood as an attempt to manipulate, once and for all, the population figures in Southern Somalia to the disadvantage of those who had originally settled there. (Africa Rights, 1993)" Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 225.

groups of young men who remained dangerously unpunishable and unreachable, outside the influence of clan elders or the clan-based militias.<sup>76</sup> Other profitable industries that emerged during the civil war years were the production of 'technicals', SUVs and pickup trucks re-fitted with large weapons, and the transport and sale of *khat*, leaves that were chewed for a stimulant effect. Both these industries made large profits from sales to militia and young bandit groups; according to Scott Peterson, both were largely controlled by Osman Ato, Aidid's primary financier.<sup>77</sup>

In January 1992, a full year after much of the international community's abandonment of Somalia, the UN Undersecretary for Political Affairs, James Jonah undertook a day's stopover in Mogadishu, after the UN was urged to become involved in Somalia by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Jonah failed to get either Ali Mahdi or Aidid to agree to a ceasefire. Drysdale argues that Aidid at this point saw Jonah as supporting Ali Mahdi through his proposal to put foreign troops in Mogadishu and thus was not prepared to talk.<sup>78</sup> In response to this unsuccessful effort, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 733 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This resolution imposed an arms embargo on Somalia, an action deemed acceptable by the US, which at this point vigorously opposed the involvement of peacekeepers.

By March 3, 1992, a ceasefire had been agreed between Aidid and Ali Mahdi with UN witnesses; this resulted in a further UN resolution (746) being signed to encourage continued UN humanitarian work in Somalia and to support the dispatch of a twenty person technical team to monitor the ceasefire. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali took a personal interest in the case of Somalia, seeing it as a post-Cold War chance for more robust UN solutions to African problems, and further recommended "the establishment of a United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), comprising fifty military observers to monitor the cease-fire, and a 500-strong infantry unit to provide United Nations convoys of relief supplies with a

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<sup>76</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 226-228.

<sup>77</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 40.

sufficiently strong military escort to deter attack".<sup>79</sup> A coordinator was needed on the ground in Somalia to manage UN arrival groups, increased aid activities and negotiation with Somali leaders. On April 28, 1992, Boutros-Ghali appointed Algerian diplomat, Mohammed Sahnoun as Special Representative for Somalia; resolution 751 had been passed four days earlier, establishing UNOSOM I as a mission.

Sahnoun, who by all accounts undertook his role with energy and commitment, decries the wasted opportunities in Somalia as he saw them. He had been critical of the UN's efforts in Somalia from their commencement, arguing that a stronger focus should have been put on diplomacy by those who were willing to spend an extended period of time in Somalia rather than shuttle in for a few hours. These diplomatic efforts should have been undertaken in conjunction with greater international pressure for peace, including cuts to bilateral trade and development assistance. In Sahnoun's opinion, much more extensive use of regional organisations should have been made before involving the UN.<sup>80</sup> Sahnoun's primary difficulty following his appointment was that, despite several more Security Council resolutions, the international will actually to commit and use resources in Somalia was not forthcoming and negotiation with Somali groups remained slow.<sup>81</sup> Early UN-sponsored peace talks in January and February 1992 had involved Ali Mahdi and Aidid or their representatives almost exclusively, thus alienating smaller, neutral Somali clans and sending the implicit message that those who did not hold military sway in Somalia were not of primary importance in the peace process.<sup>82</sup>

Despite Sahnoun's negotiating successes with factional leaders and members of surviving Somali civilian organisations, there was no coercive component to his mission. By early September 1992, UN resolutions had approved the placement of over

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<sup>79</sup> "United Nations Operation in Somalia I: Mission Backgrounder", Department of Public Information, United Nations, March 21, 1997, [www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unosomi.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unosomi.htm) (accessed March 29, 2007). All previous information on UN activities in this paragraph also comes from this document.

<sup>80</sup> "'It's difficult to point to a situation where armed intervention represented a solution.' An interview with Muhammad Sahnoun." *Middle East Report* (March-June 1994): 30.

<sup>81</sup> Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities* (Washington D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 1994): 10-15.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffrey Clark, "Debacle in Somalia", *Foreign Affairs* 72, Is. 1 (Winter 1993): 115.

four thousand personnel in Somalia, but only fifty unarmed Pakistani officers were actually on the ground.<sup>83</sup> Sahnoun commented that at this stage NGOs who had remained in Somalia throughout the conflict were trusted and respected by Somali citizens to a much greater extent than the UN. The UN was seen as ill-prepared and unable to operate in the face of the armed groups or to enforce any of its resolutions or decrees. This opinion was at least partly confirmed when the 500 Pakistani UN peacekeepers whom Sahnoun was eventually offered and whom he convinced the Somalis to accept arrived two and a half months late and then refused to be deployed outside their barracks without permission from the Pakistani government.<sup>84</sup>

During Sahnoun's time as UN chief in Somalia, the famine situation in certain areas of the country was 'discovered'. This story and companion imagery caused a short surge of media and governmental interest in Somalia; the coverage highlighted death counts, potential numbers at risk of death, and the looting of food aid by armed groups of men. Such footage came late in terms of actual conditions on the ground in Somalia. August and September 1992 were the height of the famine, which had been growing in scale well before these dates and began to subside throughout the autumn, before the US-dominated UNITAF mission had even been widely contemplated. Much of this early, and often undisclosed, success at easing the famine can be credited to Sahnoun, innovative aid agencies, and to the determined efforts of Somali citizens themselves. Sahnoun was active in drawing media attention to the region and assisted in negotiations to bring some stability to southern Somalia, which helped death rates to begin dropping by the autumn of 1992.<sup>85</sup> The media only arrived in any great quantity in Somalia at the peak of the inter-riverine famine and then promptly disappeared again for much of the autumn during US election season; Somalia could not compete as 'priority' news with the election, or many other events. According to Jeffrey Clark, the State Department was also heavily involved in the Balkans and Iraq, with additional

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<sup>83</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 46.

<sup>84</sup> "'It's difficult to point to a situation where armed intervention represented a solution.' An interview with Muhammed Sahnoun.", 33.

<sup>85</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 37.

issues in the former Soviet Union, and thus did not give Somalia much attention until July 1992.<sup>86</sup>

Drysdale is particularly clear in his narrative of the early stages of UN involvement that, despite media reports based on dramatic aid agency figures, all of Somalia was not dying. For political reasons and due to patterns of fighting, famine was predominately concentrated in the inter-riverine area, where fighting and crop destruction had been intense, but the desperate situation in this part of the country was often represented to the external world as that of all of Somalia. Drysdale also believes that the amounts of food being looted were often exaggerated. He claims that by the end of October 1992, ICRC was reporting only a twenty percent theft of aid as opposed to the eighty percent commonly cited by Sahnoun's replacement.<sup>87</sup>

The lack of consistent attention meant that famine in Somalia was not well-understood by all Western interveners and was not explained in many media sources. Paul Lowe, a photojournalist who spent time in Somalia during the height of the famine in August 1992 and during the American troop arrival in December 1992, explains the famine situation as he experienced it:

I think when we were in Baidoa we all basically stayed at a hotel, what passed for a hotel; it was a pretty basic setup but it had a restaurant and I remember getting spaghetti bolognese in the restaurant there. So there was food again there but it was a very functioning, I mean Somalia was...functioning as a country despite the conflict... you could move from place to place, there were markets, restaurants... So certainly from what I saw, from what I experienced, the problem wasn't with the availability of food per se, it was about how you controlled that, who could afford to buy it or not.<sup>88</sup>

Lowe's comments highlight the political nature of the famine in Somalia; it was both geographically localized and tied to economic issues of access, depending on the connections and financial situation of individual Somalis. The web of economic and

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<sup>86</sup> Clark, "Debacle in Somalia", 118.

<sup>87</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 56 and 4-5 (relating to theft of aid supplies).

<sup>88</sup> Author's interview with photojournalist, Paul Lowe, November 2005.



social relations which dictated Somali access to food and supplies was therefore a crucial aspect of the conflict which was rarely highlighted by policymakers or media.

As the US and various Western governments began to express a greater willingness to donate food, supplies and aircraft to make humanitarian deliveries after news of the famine broke, Sahnoun managed the difficult task of negotiating possible arrivals of peacekeeping forces to protect and distribute these goods with factional leaders such as Aidid. He was frustrated to the point of resignation from his assignment in October 1992 when the UN announced the additional approval of three thousand peacekeeping troops on top of the expected 500 Pakistani troops without first allowing Sahnoun to consult with Somali leaders.<sup>89</sup> Both Aidid and Ali Mahdi reacted angrily to the possibility of unapproved additional peacekeepers; Aidid's forces shelled UNOSOM forces at Mogadishu's airport and Ali Mahdi's supporters shot at ships carrying food as they attempted to enter Mogadishu's seaport. These increased tensions between Somali military factions and the UN were felt by relief workers, who experienced a surge in looting and hijacking of their vehicles and warehouses.<sup>90</sup>

Sahnoun's loss is bemoaned by many commentators as marking the end of constructive diplomacy and peace-building in Somalia. Sahnoun felt unable to work within the UN bureaucracy and argued that productive starts he had made on negotiating disarmament programs and the regionalization of politics through consultation with Somali elders had been jeopardized by the UN's actions.<sup>91</sup> Drysdale, while he generally praises Sahnoun's efforts, is more uncertain about the possible roles for Somali elders in facilitating peace during the civil war. "Elders can do little about armed clansmen who perceive their obligations in political terms, requiring a political solution to the state of sub-clan disequilibrium, not in terms of compensation for wrong-doing which is the traditional role of elders in council."<sup>92</sup> Alternately, however, Drysdale argues that the power of elders, once established, is certain, while politicians

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<sup>89</sup> Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities*, 39-40. This was UN resolution 775, according to Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 42.

<sup>90</sup> "United Nations Operation in Somalia I: Mission Backgrounder".

<sup>91</sup> Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities*, 37-40.

<sup>92</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 71.

in Somalia remain in a much more precarious position, constantly needing to negotiate for support or fight to quell dissent.

For Drysdale, it was crucial that insecurity in Somalia be understood as stemming from both political tensions and opportunistic banditry, two issues which he viewed as requiring different approaches by the international community. In both cases, he believed that significant amounts of Somali civilian participation were crucial and he later praises the efforts of the northern, breakaway nation of Somaliland, which used a council of its elders to decide on uses for resources and to ground the basis of its new political system with no international assistance.<sup>93</sup>

Sahnoun was replaced as UNOSOM I coordinator by an Iraqi diplomat, Ismat Kittani; Kittani is generally accepted by commentators as having been less willing to actively involve Somali leaders in UN planning, which led to increased distrust of the mission in Somalia.<sup>94</sup> At this point, 500 Pakistani peacekeepers had finally arrived but were trapped at the airport in Mogadishu; they were ill-equipped, had angered Aidid by taking possession of the airport, and did not feel safe leaving their base to patrol.<sup>95</sup> Plans for a more significant intervention, however, were afoot; the UN and US had chosen, with the defection of Sahnoun, to interpret the situation in Somalia as one which required a large influx of foreign assistance, in terms of leadership, equipment and bodies on the ground. In contrast to this top-down approach, some independent aid agencies appeared to be faring far better with a decentralized approach. Philip Johnston, president of CARE, had recently begun facilitating a new style of relief program, which emphasized collaboration with Somalis, rather than refusing to trust locals.

Both Sahnoun and Africa Watch director Alex De Waal have since argued that the 'spectacular' solution of large scale intervention had a centralizing effect on the Somalia conflict, which overemphasized the power of factional war leaders in

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<sup>93</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 73.

<sup>94</sup> This fact is mentioned in Drysdale, Stevenson and John L. Hirsch & Robert B. Oakley.

<sup>95</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 44.

Mogadishu at the expense of a more grassroots approach.<sup>96</sup> As large-scale intervention in Somalia became more likely towards the end of 1992, some localized efforts were put on hold in many areas in favour of planning the massive logistical arrival of US troops. The problem with this strategic move, according to James Mayall, was that the show of military might was designed to be limited from its inception and so would have at best a temporary impact on the daily practices and economies of the Somali conflict. It thus was not prepared to secure long-term change in Somalia. Its only immediate consequence in the eyes of many relief workers was to draw resources away from aid agencies trying to continue their work with Somalis.<sup>97</sup>

The next section will introduce some of the broader, and often conflicting, political factors and discourses which were circulating during the American decision to intervene in Somalia. The UNITAF mission was organised as a 'stronger' option, involving extensive US military and logistical aid, after the perceived failure of UNOSOM I to accomplish many peace-building goals in Somalia. As this section has shown, however, UNOSOM I did not act as robustly on its mandate as it might have, and did not give significant support to early, regional diplomatic efforts. Individual countries involved in UNOSOM I were reluctant to get involved on the ground in Somalia. Sahnoun's attempts at engagement with local leaders, both traditional and factional, were undermined by the inefficiency of some UN bodies and by the decision to dramatically increase the military aspect of intervention in Somalia with the creation of UNITAF. Throughout this period, when Somalia was discussed, it tended to be represented as an anarchic mess, full of starving people. The more complex political and economic factors underlying much of the violence and famine do not appear to have been on at least the publicly-discussed agendas of many involved parties in Somalia. Complications with intervention strategies, following from viewing the

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<sup>96</sup> Mohamed Sahnoun, "Flashlights Over Mogadishu", *The New Internationalist*, No. 262 (Dec. 1994): 9 and Alex De Waal & Rakiya Omaar, "Can Military Intervention Be 'Humanitarian'?", *Middle East Report* (March-June 1994): 6.

<sup>97</sup> Mayall, *The New Interventionism 1991-1994*, 17.

country relatively simplistically as a group of starving people being prevented from receiving food aid, will be seen in following chapter sections.

### **'Saving' Somalia: 'The New World Order' & Decisions to Intervene**

In the early 1990s, there was growing optimism in the international arena and in academic circles that the end of the Cold War was providing an option to end the free-market, socialist and non-aligned divides which had often paralysed UN decision-making and action on various issues of international importance. Predictions were made that it would now be possible for the UN to enter a more active phase of existence and deal multilaterally with problems such as the internal 'ethnic' conflicts in Somalia and Bosnia. The US appeared buoyed by its success in 'liberating' Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War, an action which was approved by a newly cooperative Security Council. The international response to Somalia, when it first began in early 1992, was also presented as groundbreaking in that the Security Council invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter for the first time without the consent of a sovereign government for explicitly humanitarian reasons. This was deemed a necessary step since there was no legitimate governing body to invite the UN into the 'failed state' of Somalia.<sup>98</sup>

Senator Richard Lugar, a former chairman of the American Senate Foreign Relations Committee, concurs that post-Cold War a new understanding of international relations began to be developed. Interest in the integrity of territorial borders shifted to a morally-justified concept of acceptable intervention in 'intra-state' issues. The cases for which interventions were justified, however, had no set principle. American positions on intervention ranged from a new form of semi-isolationism to a universalist notion of US security being intimately tied to total global stability.<sup>99</sup> Variations between these two extremes appeared at the international level, between the US and the UN; at the American bureaucratic level, between various US institutions; and within

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<sup>98</sup> See Mayall, *The New Interventionism 1991-1994*, 94 and Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 172.

<sup>99</sup> Senator Lugar, PBS *Frontline* "Ambush in Mogadishu" interview, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews/lugar.html> (accessed July 18, 2007).

leadership agendas, such as Bill Clinton's. Lugar uses an example within the Clinton administration to illustrate oscillation between these two tendencies. Clinton had criticised Bush during the election campaign for his failure to show commitment to ending conflict in Bosnia and Somalia and he strongly promoted US involvement in multilateral peacemaking efforts. Clinton's key motto for his election campaign, however, had been 'It's the economy, stupid', indicating his alternative, and perhaps incompatible, wish to turn most of his attention to improving America's social services and to focus on its domestic agenda.<sup>100</sup>

At the bureaucratic level, as a large-scale US intervention in Somalia became more likely, parts of the American leadership, especially within the military sector, increasingly voiced their concerns regarding the deployment of troops into an insecure situation with no clear end goals. Academic Jon Western conducted elite interviews and concluded that action was taken on Somalia due to the "political interplay of competing foreign policy elites, who held different normative beliefs about when and where the United States should intervene".<sup>101</sup> In the case of both Somalia and Bosnia, the framing of these conflicts as intractable and not within America's national interest sphere, the dominant view within the US military establishment, was in direct conflict with the beliefs of NGOs and humanitarian liberals, who tended to be pro-intervention.

Western's opinion is that the battle of these two viewpoints resulted in a 'compromise' situation of action being taken in Somalia in an attempt to prevent US involvement in Bosnia, which had been assessed as more costly and difficult. After Clinton's election victory:

President Bush and General Powell concluded that liberal humanitarianism would dominate the new administration...Given the shift in power in Washington and the intensity of mobilized political

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<sup>100</sup> This contradiction was noted by Paul Wolfowitz in his article "Clinton's First Year", *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 1 (Jan/Feb. 1994): 28-43. Here Wolfowitz discusses the importance of a strategic American foreign policy focused on clearly articulated national interest goals. Activities undertaken should be followed through to successful completion, not conducted on a testing or trial by error manner which shows weakened American resolve.

<sup>101</sup> Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia", *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 117.

pressure to respond to humanitarian emergencies, Bush and Powell decided that if the United States was going to intervene, it would be in Somalia- not in Bosnia. Somalia was the easier of the two missions.<sup>102</sup>

Economic considerations, as well as strategic ones, also likely produced an abrupt policy turnaround situation whereby the Pentagon's resistance to becoming involved in Somalia under Bush shifted to a more positive outlook on the mission under Clinton. Tension between military officials and incoming members of the Clinton administration would likely have been increased by the perception within the armed forces that Clinton was anti-military and ready to slash defense budgets.<sup>103</sup> Patrick Gilkes argues that the collapse in Pentagon resistance to intervention in Somalia happened because the military establishment saw activity in Somalia as a way of helping to present a new humanitarian image and preserve their budget in a post-Cold War setting, especially since Clinton had agreed to the mission in advance, perhaps without realising how high the price would be.<sup>104</sup>

Interviews with senior American officials appear to confirm these interpretations. Walter Clarke, Deputy Chief of Mission for the US Embassy in Somalia between March and July 1993, also suggests that President Bush wanted to leave office on a 'high note', after receiving much criticism during the 1992 election campaign for his apparent unresponsiveness to events in Somalia and Bosnia. Clarke states: "I think he chose Somalia because it looked like it was gonna be the easier of these two major humanitarian crises."<sup>105</sup> Before the intervention took place in early December 1992 there were already calls not to allow 'mission creep' to take place.<sup>106</sup> This concern would prove to be a major source of disagreement and policy confusion between the

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<sup>102</sup> Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention", 118.

<sup>103</sup> Ambassador Oakley, PBS *Frontline* "Ambush in Mogadishu" interview, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews/oakley.html> (accessed July 18, 2007).

<sup>104</sup> Patrick Gilkes, "From Peacekeeping to Peace Enforcement: The Somalia Precedent", *Middle East Report*, no. 185 (Nov-Dec. 1993): 22.

<sup>105</sup> Walter Clarke, PBS *Frontline* "Ambush in Mogadishu" interview, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/interviews/clarke.html> (accessed July 18, 2007).

<sup>106</sup> "Do It Right in Somalia", *The New York Times*, December 1, 1992.

US and the UN, which favoured more long-term involvement in Somalia to assist in rebuilding the country's destroyed infrastructure and civil society.

Walter Clarke also offers an alternative but complementary perspective. He argues that America's Cold War-era policies and engagement with the Horn of Africa carried on to an extent after 1989, despite attempts to draft new policies that would largely remove the US from this area and encourage multilateral responses to conflicts there rather than those driven by superpowers. Clarke believes that even in 1992 there was still doubt as to whether the Cold War was really over and this doubt influenced the ways in which Somalia's situation was approached.<sup>107</sup> Others, such as the last US Ambassador to Somalia, James Bishop and former Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, have suggested when interviewed for ABC news<sup>108</sup> that the continuation of older ways of engaging with the region may merely have happened due to a sudden drop in American levels of interest and engagement with the area throughout the 1980s. With little impetus and few resources to change forms of engagement, old, Cold War patterns of understanding and behaviour remained the de facto standard.

In summary, it appears that the US, while keen to participate in a mission that would give them positive credentials for compassionate feeding and protection of civilians, wanted to be in and out of Somalia quickly for reasons of finance and national interest. Although one editorial writer argued that Somalia was not a complicated enough situation to become another Vietnam, he did express concern for how and when 'victory' could be declared. Was the delivery of aid supplies enough to constitute an international humanitarian 'victory' or was political and military involvement essential? As journalist Raymond Bonner argued, "It may be possible to re-create Somalia, but it will take years. Are we prepared to stay that long, or would we, in the end, lose heart and pull out prematurely?"<sup>109</sup> This question accurately predicts the final stages of US involvement in Somalia, despite its publication days before the troops even entered. These comments will be echoed in media coverage; decision-making

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<sup>107</sup> Walter Clarke, PBS *Frontline*, "Ambush in Mogadishu" interview.

<sup>108</sup> ABC *Nightline* in Somalia, December 8, 1992.

<sup>109</sup> Raymond Bonner, "Buy Up the Somalis' Guns", *The New York Times*, December 2, 1992.

regarding intervention and what form it would take were heavily based on competing discourses of what America's role should be in a post-Cold War world and how acting, or not acting, in Somalia would reflect on this role. Factors on the ground in Somalia became a lower priority in the decision-making process and this would become evident later as the mission began.

### **Americans Arrive: Somalia During UNITAF**

After the jump in coverage in August and September, Somalia drifted on and off the radar of American policymakers more often throughout the autumn of 1992. Despite still infrequent coverage, American military planes and personnel were increasingly being used to airlift supplies to more remote parts of Somalia, although this approach was controversial with relief agencies who often felt it was ineffective and caused increased tension on the ground. Because it was an election year, however, it was not until after the Clinton victory over Bush was official in November that media attention and political action regarding the Somali situation began to increase steadily.

Images of starving Somali women and children contrasted with shots of young Somali men with guns appeared in more intensive media coverage and references were made to high percentages of relief supplies being looted, with eighty percent becoming a commonly-cited figure.<sup>110</sup> Quoted statistics vary considerably throughout media coverage and between different aid agencies, however, just as the level of enthusiasm for a large-scale intervention varied considerably among aid workers. While a small amount of media time was given to some cautious viewpoints, the more prevalent message was that existing conditions in Somalia were disastrous and would get worse if action was not taken. Mayall and John G. Fox claim that President Bush was a key figure in supporting the Somalia mission after he lost the election. According to Fox, President Bush was given three possible plans of action at a November 25 meeting and

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<sup>110</sup> ABC and BBC TV news reports & ABC *Nightline*, December 1, 1992. BBC did not cite this figure but mentioned that over 250 thousand deaths have resulted from the famine, BBC 9 o'clock news, December 4, 1992.



chose to go with the most aggressive option of sending a full US military division to Somalia; the one division was soon increased to two by Pentagon planners.<sup>111</sup>

On November 29, 1992, Boutros-Ghali brought an American letter to the Security Council; the letter offered US military and logistical assistance in the establishment of an operation to create a secure environment in which to deliver aid in Somalia. Resolution 794 followed this letter on December 3, 1992, authorising member states cooperating in the new mission in Somalia to use “all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia.”<sup>112</sup> The Security Council’s acceptance of this resolution set the stage for a transition in interventions from UNOSOM I to the United Task Force for Somalia (UNITAF). On December 4, 1992, following the acceptance of resolution 794, President Bush announced on television his decision to initiate Operation Restore Hope.

With the approval of resolution 794, the US was to assume unified command of the new operation in Somalia. Its forces in Somalia would grow to approximately 28 thousand personnel, with an additional 17 thousand UNITAF troops arriving from over twenty other countries.<sup>113</sup> According to Hirsch and Oakley, Boutros-Ghali and the UN clearly recognised that this was an opportunity for US military might and influence to do what they could not. Allegedly, Boutros-Ghali made it clear that the UN would be unable to take over from UNITAF with a comparable force size and that UNITAF must therefore reach aggressive targets of disarmament and security for all Somalia. Obvious differences in the goals of the two groups involved would later lead to difficulties. The American military, operating on Powell-Weinberger doctrine, wanted to be in and out of Somalia quickly while UN leadership wished to see more than a strictly humanitarian mission take place.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> John G. Fox, “Approaching Humanitarian Intervention Strategically: The Case of Somalia”, *SAIS Review* XXI, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2001): 149.

<sup>112</sup> UN Security Council, S/RES/794 (1992), December 3, 1992.

<sup>113</sup> “United Nations Operation in Somalia I: Mission Backgrounder”.

<sup>114</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 46-47. The Powell-Weinberger doctrine was created in the late 1980s-early 1990s and suggested that America should approach conflicts with overwhelming amounts of military resources so that battles could be fought and won quickly, resulting in less American loss of life.

It was clear from the text of the resolution that international troops participating in the US/UN UNITAF mission would be given greater freedom to 'shoot to protect' both themselves and aid supplies; American political figures were direct about using this threat. Ambassador Robert Oakley, an American diplomat who was brought in to negotiate with clan leaders, made this point repeatedly during media interviews and President Bush himself declared during his televised speech to the nation on his decision to send American troops to Somalia that "the US won't tolerate armed gangs ripping off their own people and condemning them to starvation."<sup>115</sup> Perhaps surprisingly for many observers, Aidid accepted the arrival of US troops willingly. Drysdale explains this acceptance as expedient due to Aidid's dislike of Kittani and the remaining components of the UNOSOM I mission. Aidid allegedly hoped that US forces would be more willing to allow him a powerful place at the negotiating table for Somalia's future, where UNOSOM leaders had hoped to marginalise him. His hopes appeared to be justified when Oakley immediately bypassed Kittani. On December 11, two days after US troops had arrived without opposition on Mogadishu's beaches, Oakley went straight to both Aidid and Ali Mahdi to arrange the signing of a ceasefire in Mogadishu and the removal of heavy weapons from the city.<sup>116</sup>

At dawn on December 9, 1992 the first groups of US Marines began to land on the beaches of Mogadishu. Rumours of the American arrival had spread for weeks so the 'surprise' landings were in fact watched by hordes of Western journalists, curious Somali citizens and, through the lens of journalists, audiences at home in the West. The arrival in Somali time worked perfectly for American primetime viewing the evening before and, as mentioned above by Gilkes, was co-ordinated by military media-relations officers in an attempt to best show the military in its new role. While some of the troops seemed visibly both surprised and annoyed at their welcoming parties,

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<sup>115</sup> ABC Special Report with Peter Jennings, December 4, 1992.

<sup>116</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 87.

senior military personnel appeared to expect the attention and military press officers were among the first of the massive group to land on Somali soil.<sup>117</sup>

These officers soon had several difficult 'situations' to explain to journalists; cultural differences between the Somalis and arriving US troops were huge and there were only a very small number of Somali speakers among the arriving troops.<sup>118</sup> Immediately after the American arrival, tense interactions occurred between troops and Somali workers at Mogadishu port and airport because, as one US Marine admitted to Ted Koppel: "There are good factions and bad factions and the Marines don't know which is which so we have to keep ourselves secure first."<sup>119</sup> The intervention period was marked throughout by these kinds of misunderstandings, which were unsurprising given the interveners' lack of knowledge about the people whose country they had entered and the ways in which the US and UN troops' presence often unwittingly altered the existing balance of power and economics in Somalia.

Jonathan Stevenson comments that "the most powerful military machine in the world could tell a big missile to hit a tiny target and ferry millions of tons of equipment and supplies to a faraway land. But for most American soldiers, just saying 'hello' in Somali was impossible."<sup>120</sup> He also suggests that most information that was provided to US troops on Somali people concerned their potential to be carriers of disease and thus arriving troops were often wary of engagement with civilians.<sup>121</sup> A statement by Paul Lowe confirms this attitude of paranoia and uncertainty, as he describes a moment when US troops refused to share a locally-bought watermelon with him due to fears it was poisoned.<sup>122</sup> On a broader scale:

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<sup>117</sup> Thomas Keenan, "Live From...", in *Back to the Front: Tourisms of War* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 139 and Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement After the Cold War?", *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 2 (1996): 209. Also statements from author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

<sup>118</sup> One of these soldiers was Aidid's son, Hussein Aidid, who had been educated in the US and served a tour as a US Marine in Somalia. In the mid-1990s, he returned to take over military leadership of the *Habr Gedir* clan after his father's death.

<sup>119</sup> ABC *Nightline*, Landing in Somalia, December 8, 1992.

<sup>120</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 59.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>122</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

the glancing treatment the military gave Somali culture created 'the image of a Somali as a khat-chewing thug lying under a long-hauler' commented Mark Stirling, UNICEF's representative. It was an image that ill-served the objective of providing humanitarian relief, for which it helps if you have at least guarded respect for the people you are trying to save. Moreover, the military's derisive characterization of Somalis led to a severe underestimation of their fighting ability.<sup>123</sup>

In terms of getting their own messages to Somalis, UNITAF created a Psych-Ops unit and employed Somali-American translators to create a newspaper, *Rajo*, and a Somali language radio broadcast to explain UNITAF activities. There was concern among senior figures involved in UNITAF that the BBC Somali language service, from which most Somalis received their news, often reported inaccurately or had a political 'bias'.<sup>124</sup> The success of such ventures into media production by Somalia's interveners remains highly questionable but, as will be seen below, control over media communication with Somalis was a sought-after and fought-for privilege. For many Somali civilians, however, it was the actions of both Somali factional leaders and US/UN troops in attempting to control events in the country which spoke louder than any media framing of them could have.

Although Ambassador Oakley was clearly featured as a 'diplomatic' part of UNITAF, the primary thrust of the mission, rhetorically and in practice, appeared to remain distributing food to needy areas and leaving quickly. Despite the fact that op-ed writers, letters to the editor and televised news debates had raised the issue of what good it would do to feed Somalis for a few weeks without attempting to alter the situation that had led them to their desperate condition, the US forces in command of UNITAF appeared to believe these questions could be postponed until the takeover of a second UNOSOM mission.<sup>125</sup>

Consultations were held in Washington with relief specialists. Recommendations for a smaller and more targeted humanitarian operation in the

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<sup>123</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 62-63.

<sup>124</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 61-62.

<sup>125</sup> Fox, "Approaching Humanitarian Intervention Strategically: The Case of Somalia", 152.

famine 'triangle' were rejected in favour of using conflict-ridden Mogadishu as the base for landing most international troops. This meant that from the outset of Operation Restore Hope the American leaders of the mission had to deal with Ali Mahdi and especially Aidid, who controlled major routes out of the city and the majority of heavy weapons.<sup>126</sup> Oakley acknowledges that there were almost daily meetings between the Aidid and Ali Mahdi factions at the American Conoco oil company compound under UNITAF supervision. He feels that UNOSOM II made a big mistake ending these meetings in May 1993 and thereby alienating these 'warlords'.<sup>127</sup> The issue of how to deal with the Mogadishu factions, either through isolation or by active involvement, remains to this date a point of debate in literature on Somalia.

Despite statements of neutrality and non-engagement with Somali politics, American actions actually had the very political effect of both preserving and in many cases actively supporting the current situation on the ground in Somalia, in ways that were often obvious to others, including Somali leaders and citizens. According to De Waal, Oakley and the American forces made choices which supported Aidid's business ventures. Oakley rented a house in Somalia from Aidid's chief financier, Osman Ato, and used Aidid's moneychangers for a large amount of business converting American dollars to Somali shillings. These exchanges allegedly continued during the later UN attacks on Aidid, in which case the US/UN would actually have been bankrolling their 'enemy'.<sup>128</sup>

As a result of the above choices, and also because they did not want to be involved in long-term reconstruction in Somalia, Oakley made it clear that the factions would not be disarmed, as this would be too "imperialistic".<sup>129</sup> Oakley, Lieutenant General Robert Johnson, commander of US troops in Somalia, and Brigadier General Anthony Zinni referred to past experiences in Lebanon and Vietnam to justify their restraint. All three associated a more active political approach with the necessity of

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<sup>126</sup> Alex De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", *New Left Review*, is. 230 (July 1998): 132.

<sup>127</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 58.

<sup>128</sup> De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", 132.

<sup>129</sup> Gilkes, "From Peacekeeping to Peace Enforcement: The Somalia Precedent", 22.

dangerous and increased levels of American involvement in the Somali civil war.<sup>130</sup> Much to the disappointment of many Somali citizens, 'natural' leaders were expected to emerge without any process of organised disarmament. Somali distrust of long-term American commitment to peace in their country made many reluctant to give up their personal weapons until they were convinced that security would last. Given the American National Rifle Association's own position on the second amendment right to bear arms, many American officers found it difficult to criticize this stance. "Colonel Peter Dotto, the marines' chief disarmament officer, became enough of a believer to profess at the Addis Ababa conference in March 1993, 'It isn't fair to disarm everybody.'"<sup>131</sup> Somalia thus remained a heavily armed society, into which a large amount of free food, aid and external influence was injected. This combination was to prove ineffective for developing long-term peace and security.

While this reluctance to disarm disappointed many UN pro-interventionists and Somali citizens, Drysdale expresses the alternative belief that any active programs of disarmament and peacekeeping beyond the larger cities of Mogadishu and Kismayo were unnecessary and potentially damaging to clan political balances. Although they tried to balance raids on Ali Mahdi and Aidid to avoid claims of choosing sides, the minimal arms seizures attempted by UNITAF were almost totally ineffective in any case, given that UNITAF only operated in small 'islands' of land in Somalia. Factional leaders could thus simply hide or remove arms from UNITAF areas temporarily to avoid giving them up.<sup>132</sup> Drysdale suggests that the facilitation of a political atmosphere of tolerance and the development of mixed clan Somali policing units were key prerequisites to prevent a return to violence and that coerced disarming could not provide long-term peace for Somalia.<sup>133</sup>

Regardless of a frequent lack of understanding between Somali citizens and American troops, the American-led coalition had the support of the majority of the

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<sup>130</sup> Fox, "Approaching Humanitarian Intervention Strategically: The Case of Somalia", 153.

<sup>131</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 73-74.

<sup>132</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 65.

<sup>133</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 104-106.

Somali population during the early stages of the intervention. One of the greatest surprises for international troops was the extent to which the famine that they had been sent to ease had already subsided by the time they arrived. Weather conditions had improved for crop re-planting and, with assistance from aid agencies, even some of the most hard-hit Somali communities had been able to improve their general health and material resources enough to allow more economic activity to resume. Photojournalist Paul Lowe comments that by the time UNITAF began, the famine situation in Somalia was dramatically improved and many saw it as a gesture rather than a necessary action:

(B)y December it pretty much felt like the famine was under control. By the point of the US intervention, you did feel, a lot of us felt that, it was a useless gesture, too much too late. And it was very much staged for US domestic; the feeling of people on the ground was that it was a very stage-managed thing and was predominately for US consumption, domestic consumption, rather than the good of Somalia.<sup>134</sup>

The securing and safe delivery of aid supplies began happening relatively swiftly after the UNITAF mission began, especially in the vicinity of Mogadishu. Since Ali Mahdi and Aidid had given initial blessing to UNITAF's presence, the airport and seaport were secured by American forces within forty-eight hours.<sup>135</sup> There was plenty of positive Christmas imagery of US troops handing out food to thin Somali children and President Bush arrived for a brief visit on New Year's Eve for photo opportunities with the troops.

By January 1993, several major routes to inland towns had been opened up and food was reaching the once-starving towns of Baidoa and Bardera. Discussions began, both between policymakers and in the media, about when most of the American troops would pull out, having done the basics of their humanitarian mission. The UN and most Somali citizens, however, favoured a more extended peace-building role for the American-led force. They wanted policing and disarmament campaigns as well as efforts to re-engage elders and traditional Somali leaders in political discussions about

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<sup>134</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

<sup>135</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 59.

the country's future. This was precisely the long-term political role which the US had been hoping to avoid and so difficult talks about the nature of mission handover began between US and UN officials.

By early 1993, Aidid was beginning to question the value of having the American-led force in Somalia. UN forces on the ground did not intervene to support his troops in a battle for the southern city of Kismayo with the rival forces of General Hersi Morgan, whose forces overran the city under the watch of US and Belgian troops.<sup>136</sup> News of this UN failure to act led to rioting by Aidid supporters in Mogadishu for several days in late February 1993 and for the first time since they had arrived US troops were confined to their base. Scott Peterson points out the significance of this moment: "The US was unable or unwilling to stop the unrest, and within hours the lesson was clear: Aidid was still in control, easily able to disrupt the calm on his whim. He no longer trusted US or UN 'neutrality'."<sup>137</sup>

After this incident, US officials became increasingly anxious to finish their part of the mission and hand over to the UN; Boutros-Ghali submitted his recommendations for this transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II on March 3, 1993. The new mission was to have the ambitious peacemaking goals that had been planned for Somalia early on by UN personnel, once again with the enforcement powers from Chapter VII of the UN Charter. UNOSOM II was formally established by Security Council resolution 814 on March 26, 1993 but was not to assume full responsibility from UNITAF until May 1993.<sup>138</sup>

Drysdale comments that a March 1993 conference including UNITAF forces, UN personnel and Somali groups did not plan enough for the daily administrative tasks that would be crucial, especially in Mogadishu, for development programs to work in a cohesive fashion. He feels that at the end of these talks some senior US and UN officials seemed afraid that the Somali talks had gone *too* far towards discussions of re-emerging Somali sovereignty, something he claims that he and UN Deputy Special

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<sup>136</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 112.

<sup>137</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 66.

<sup>138</sup> "United Nations Operations in Somalia I: Mission Backgrounder".



Representative Lansana Kouyate found nonsensical.<sup>139</sup> Although departing US official rhetoric glowed about the changes that had been wrought under their command, Peterson reports that violence against aid workers was on the rise again and that a general atmosphere of tension pervaded during the May 1993 changeover, especially around Mogadishu.<sup>140</sup> 'Technicals' were back on the streets at near pre-intervention numbers and a lack of disarmament programs meant that Somali looting groups and militias were still well-armed. When the majority of American troops left, many Somalis were in a generally better-fed state than when the Americans had entered, but little had been done to tackle issues of disarmament, policing, re-engagement of Somali civilian leaders and elders in peace talks, and economic stability, all issues which were crucial for Somalia's long-term rebuilding.

## UNOSOM II: The Road to 'Black Hawk Down'

When the UN took over, it had significantly less staff than its UNITAF predecessor but a hugely more ambitious agenda- total forced disarmament, the creation of a new government and the rebuilding of Somalia's governing infrastructure. The UN force was twenty percent smaller than UNITAF but was responsible for all of Somalia, an area over twice the size of the nine relief sectors covered by UNITAF.<sup>141</sup> Drysdale claims this goal was far too broad and allowed excessive use of force by UNOSOM personnel. In his view, UNOSOM II was threatened by Aidid's independent stance and was sensitive to "being upstaged" by his actions; Aidid rivals such as Ali Mahdi allegedly only encouraged UNOSOM to feel this way.<sup>142</sup> UNOSOM II's twenty-three state, 18 thousand+ troop force was backed by a US logistics team and contained a 1,300 man, US-commanded Quick Reaction Force but funding for both military endeavours and humanitarian rebuilding had been significantly cut.<sup>143</sup> Despite this

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<sup>139</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 127.

<sup>140</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 68.

<sup>141</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 78.

<sup>142</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 168.

<sup>143</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 66. Hirsch & Oakley estimate that about 4000 US personnel remained to be part of UNOSOM II, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 109.

handover and the scaling down of forces, UNOSOM II was still run almost totally by Americans. Boutros-Ghali's Special Envoy was Admiral Jonathan Howe from the American Navy and all US forces which were to become involved in Somalia's affairs were controlled by US commanders who reported directly back to CENTCOM in Florida, not the UN.

The first major UNOSOM II disaster, which brought the unspoken UN policy of diminishing Aidid's power into open acceptance, was the killing of twenty-four Pakistani UN troops who were sent to search Aidid's Radio Mogadishu station headquarters for weapons. The UN troops were ambushed and killed by Somali gunmen said to be affiliated with Aidid. The station had become notorious with the UN in recent months for its alleged broadcasts condemning the UN mission as imperialist and neo-colonial.<sup>144</sup> The killing of the Pakistanis brought Western media attention back to Somalia, especially as it became clear that the UN would not permit its troops to be attacked in this way and would respond by punishing Aidid, the suspected organiser of the attacks. UN resolution 837 was passed the day after the attacks, authorising UN forces to take "all necessary measures" to apprehend those responsible for the attack.<sup>145</sup>

There were immediate dissenters to this position. John Drysdale had been brought to the country by the UN as an advisor and had had unparalleled access to all the faction leaders. He was not convinced that Aidid alone was guilty of organising the attacks or could have controlled the scale of them even if he was. Drysdale argues that, from the Somali perspective, the inspection was a hostile takeover of their radio station, followed by an incident of UN troops opening fire on civilian demonstrators against the operation. After reviewing transcripts of Radio Mogadishu's broadcasts from May 1 to June 3, Drysdale concluded that "(t)here may have been virulent broadcasts on Aideed's controlled radio before May, but certainly the transcriptions of May 1-June 3 broadcasts by Mogadishu Radio did not justify the fear, expressed by senior UNOSOM

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<sup>144</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 72-73.

<sup>145</sup> De Waal, *US War Crimes in Somalia*, 133.

II officials, that Aideed had 'tarnished the reputation of UNOSOM II' and 'brought UNOSOM II into contempt.'<sup>146</sup>

Tom Farer of American University was recruited to gather evidence and descriptions of what had happened during the attack. According to Peterson and Drysdale, however, Farer was not permitted off the UNOSOM base and could not guarantee protection for those who testified. His evidence that Aidid-aligned fighters attacked UNOSOM soldiers comes almost exclusively from the soldiers themselves; no Somali eyewitnesses were interviewed. Any attempts to bring Aidid before an impartial tribunal were thus essentially curtailed before they could start. Reprisal attacks by the UN seemed inevitable, drawing them into the civil war as yet another violent party in many Somalis' eyes. Although Drysdale does not deny the horror of the attacks, he argues that an example needed to be set through the use of a fair trial, not through a resort to retaliatory violence. Drysdale explains that he advised Admiral Howe to proceed with a trial but instead, in preparation for their attacks, the UN moved the majority of its personnel into the newly-rebuilt and heavily-fortified US Embassy compound in Mogadishu, an area they would rarely leave in future due to security concerns.<sup>147</sup> According to Peterson, "Somalis, now completely cut off from the UN operation that would make so many devastating decisions about their future, referred with disgust to the walled compound as the 'Camp of the Murderers.'"<sup>148</sup>

The first UN offensive attacks in Somalia were carried out by American forces on the morning of June 12, 1993 and involved the aerial destruction of Radio Mogadishu and several of Aidid's weapons sites. These attacks would continue throughout the summer of 1993, leading to a worsening of already strained relations between UN interveners and Somali citizens. Angered by the civilian deaths and property destruction caused by the attacks, Somali citizens protested the bombings and set up barricades near the US Embassy. They were shot at by Pakistani peacekeepers, who were sent out to guard the compound, which led to several deaths, many injuries

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<sup>146</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 176.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 184-191.

<sup>148</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 79.

and further bad feeling. Despite this furious atmosphere on the streets, Peterson reports that inside the Embassy compound Admiral Howe and other senior UN figures were declaring success, arguing that they would not let a few dead Somalis stand in the way of their productive bombing of Aidid and Osman Ato's weapons sites.<sup>149</sup> This is confirmed by Drysdale, who says that while he did not speak in such terms himself, Howe was surrounded by American military commanders who openly stated that their goal was to kill Aidid, not capture him. UNOSOM II's political and humanitarian goals were put on the back burner by the triumph of this militaristic viewpoint over voices like Drysdale's. Drysdale suggests that their confidence in being able to deal with Aidid and his supporters through military attacks on Mogadishu was severely misled: "Without the remotest knowledge of Somali society or culture, Psy-ops attempted to play psychological tricks on Somalis. These three nights of devastating shell blasts, mixed with flares and loudspeakers, were designed to reduce Aideed's psyche to pulp so that he would throw up his arms and surrender. They did not know their target-Aideed stayed calmly in his house throughout the raids."<sup>150</sup>

Those journalists who were still on the ground and able to negotiate the dangers of Mogadishu's streets to go to the sites of destruction were faced with conflicting accounts. When it became obvious that the UN could not deny its own part in the 'collateral' violence and destruction, it alleged that 'hard core militia' elements were using Somali women and children as human shields and firing into crowds of their own demonstrators in order to incite more rage and violence. While a few Somalis did agree that there was incitement, many others vehemently rejected these claims. Relief workers were for the most part deeply disturbed by the attacks, arguing that they were doing nothing except creating a large rift between all foreigners and Somalis.<sup>151</sup> As UN attacks continued, errors in targeting inevitably occurred and Somali casualty numbers

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<sup>149</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 81-85. Peterson reports that there was debate between journalists and UN military briefers over why the Pakistanis were sent out to deal with protestors so soon after their comrades had been brutally attacked and killed. This apparently went against military protocols designed to prevent revenge killings. Peterson gives no answer from the UN on this question.

<sup>150</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 192-193. Further information from above the quote is on 196-197.

<sup>151</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 85-86.

mounted. Peterson notes that, due to the risk of Somali reprisal attacks, media were increasingly unable to visit bombed sites to report on attacks. Coverage of the conflict suffered, with media having to judge between trumped-up reports from both sides.<sup>152</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1993, the anti-Aidid attacks and escalating Somali violence continued in Mogadishu. The UN missile attacks on Digfer Hospital in mid-June constituted a war crime in the eyes of many, breaching the Geneva Conventions<sup>153</sup>, and caused casualties among the primarily Somali doctors and patients within the hospital. These attacks were prompted, however, because Somali snipers were using the hospital roof as a shooting point at UN forces. This incident graphically illustrates the ways in which the militias versus US/UN battle often had dire consequences for citizens uninvolved in the 'dispute'.<sup>154</sup> Admiral Howe declared Aidid a wanted man and put a twenty-five thousand dollar price on his head in 'Wild West' style; psy-ops teams scattered flyers to this effect over Mogadishu. Thus Aidid joined the ranks of General Manuel Noreiga, Saddam Hussein and others as a 'Hitler'-like figure, made responsible for all Somalia's ills, whose capture or death would eliminate problems to what had rhetorically become *world* safety. In ironic response, Somalis put up a \$1 million reward for the capture of 'Animal' Howe.<sup>155</sup> UN and US propaganda had failed to convince them that bombing Mogadishu was an appropriate way to deal with Aidid. Ironically, many who had not supported Aidid previously rallied to his side once the American attacks increased.

The resort to this type of approach indicated a failure of the US commanders of UNOSOM II to understand the principles and motivations of the Somali public. In his heroic defiance of an aggressive UN, Aidid came to represent aspects of historical Somali anti-colonial fights that many could relate to and respect. Tyrannical though he was, Aidid's charisma and clan ties helped to protect him as he continued to

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<sup>152</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 87-88.

<sup>153</sup> "Under the Geneva Conventions, a hospital should be protected. If one belligerent party violates the neutrality of a hospital by, for example, stationing snipers there, the other party cannot simply attack; it must give warning and provide some protection for civilians. The UN forces did not do that; they just attacked, almost certainly with excessive force." De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", 139-140.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>155</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 93-94.

successfully hide from UN troops in his south Mogadishu stronghold. Somalis, primarily those of Aidid's own *Habr Gedir* clan living in south Mogadishu, were now willing to overlook many of his flaws given the new risks to their lives at the hands of the UN forces.<sup>156</sup>

The US/UN anti-Aidid activities at times took on further elements of farce and tragedy. As Aidid continued to evade capture, Howe requested and was granted a unit of elite counter-terrorism and extraction troops, both US Army Rangers and some Delta Force operatives. This request took the UN capabilities in Somalia far beyond what any non-American or even American civilian leader could likely have attained. These new forces, however, reported only to their separate US commanders and did not necessarily work in conjunction with other UN forces.<sup>157</sup> On July 12, US helicopters fired rockets into a building where senior members of Aidid's clan were holding a meeting in an attempt to secure a peace agreement with the Americans. De Waal quotes ICRC estimates that at least fifty-four Somalis were killed, including some who had been in contact with Admiral Howe only days before. Casualty figures ranged from twelve to seventy, however, depending on whether UNOSOM or Somali groups were spoken to. Many of the dead were said to be clan elders and religious figures with few or no ties to Aidid's militia units and women who had come to serve food and drink at the event.

When journalists arrived to cover the attack they were set upon by angry Somalis and four, including twenty-three-year-old Dan Eldon, were killed.<sup>158</sup> By this point, conditions were so dangerous in Mogadishu that many international UN troops stationed there refused to patrol. Relations between US forces and specific national troops who deeply opposed the anti-Aidid tactics taken by the Americans, such as the

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<sup>156</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 95.

<sup>157</sup> De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", 115. De Waal also outlines a specific example of US/UN lack of communications. One of the Rangers' and Deltas' earliest operations "involved descending from helicopters to raid an 'Aidid stronghold' that turned out to be a house rented by the UN Development Programme, where they held UN staff at gunpoint and forced an Egyptian diplomat, in her negligence, to lie down on shards of broken glass."

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

Italians, were strained almost beyond any form of cooperation.<sup>159</sup> Various relief agencies accused UNOSOM II of breaching the Geneva Conventions. The mission's own legal advisor sent a memorandum to Admiral Howe the day after the attacks on the *Habr Gedir* council in which he warned that Security Council authorisation to find the Pakistanis' killers did not support disregard for international humanitarian law.<sup>160</sup>

The events of October 3 and 4, 1993, the days of the failed final mission to capture Aidid and the downing of two American Black Hawk helicopters, represented the nadir of deteriorating conditions between many Somalis and their UN interveners. The plan was once again to use the Rangers and Delta Forces to drop by helicopter into an alleged meeting between Aidid and his clan leaders, arrest them and then pull out in an armoured convoy. Somali clan militias, as well as many frustrated citizens, were tipped off to this planned arrest, however, and began converging on the meeting point, deep in *Hebr Gedir*-controlled south Mogadishu, instead of fleeing. After two helicopters had been shot down with shoulder-held rocket propelled grenades, the Somalis had many US soldiers trapped on the ground in territory they knew well, perfect for ambushing. Following American military protocol, the remaining soldiers refused to leave their comrades, dead or alive, to the enemy. They consequently took most of their eighteen losses and seventy-seven injuries trying to rescue bodies and survivors around the two crash sites. Two Delta operatives were killed attempting to save one injured Black Hawk pilot, Michael Durant, who was taken hostage by Aidid's forces.

British and Canadian journalists were among the few Western media personnel still in Somalia; American media had been evacuated due to the poor security situation. These journalists were taken to see the wreckage of the helicopters after the battles. Paul Watson of *The Toronto Star* newspaper was able to photograph the now-notorious images of mutilated American bodies being dragged around by triumphant Somali

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<sup>159</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 109.

<sup>160</sup> De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", 141.

citizens; a Somali cameraman recorded the video footage.<sup>161</sup> These images were briefly shown on many Western TV networks and as photographs in newspapers before a basically unanimous and largely uncoordinated editorial decision was made not to show them because of their graphic nature.

While the eighteen dead Americans were heralded for their bravery and mourned by their nation, the Somali death count as a result of the pitched battles remains an area of uncertainty and debate. De Waal quotes initial estimates at about 200. Mark Bowden, author of *Black Hawk Down*, an in-depth study of the battle, estimates nearly 500 and De Waal notes that this is lower than some counts done by Somali elders.<sup>162</sup> Many accounts mention that doctors in Mogadishu's main hospitals were flooded with hundreds of casualties. Numbers will likely remain difficult to assess due to the poor state of many of Mogadishu's hospitals, which were barely able to provide basic services, let alone keep records. In short, as suggested by De Waal, the US doctrine of overwhelming force ensured minimal US casualties but was a disastrous policy for Somalis living in a situation of urban warfare, where a cautious approach was essential if there was to be any distinguishing between civilians and combatants.<sup>163</sup> As has been discussed above, breaches of the Geneva Conventions were unavoidable under the anti-Aidid policy mandate, and US 'high-tech' solutions of directly targeting Aidid repetitively failed to accurately pinpoint 'the enemy' while frequently resulting in more civilian deaths and infrastructure destruction. The demonization of Aidid was simplistic and failed to recognise the deep dissatisfaction of many Somali citizens with UNOSOM policies. In attempting to isolate Aidid as the sole 'cause' of Somalia's problems, the UNOSOM II mission essentially created a whole host of new enemies within the Somali public.

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<sup>161</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 138-142. For detailed accounts of the events surrounding the October 3-4, 1993 incidents, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: a Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999).

<sup>162</sup> De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", 142.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 142.



### **Leaving Somalia: Narrating the Aftermath**

As has been suggested in Chapter Two, the Somalia intervention is an important case study largely because the tragic results of the 'Black Hawk down' mission severely damaged US support for more robust peacekeeping missions in the future. Although there was strong rhetoric about 'beefing up' American military personnel and equipment in Somalia post- 'Black Hawk down' events, these reinforcements were only to stay in the country to facilitate a full American pullout by March 31, 1994. This withdrawal date was announced by a shaken President Clinton only days after the October 3-4 events. The Administration was under intense Congressional and public pressure to pull American troops out of such an 'ungrateful' place and had, in fact, been under increasing pressure to do so for several weeks before the tragedy. The final straw was almost certainly the widely- if only briefly- seen images which prompted public remembrance, and then outrage, at the Somali situation. American attitudes towards Somalia had largely changed in less than a year from compassion for suffering 'innocents' to disgust at their troops' involvement in such a barbaric mess. Images showing women and children involved in the post-Black Hawk body-dragging had likely irrevocably altered Western perceptions of 'innocence' and 'responsibility' in such a situation.

The pullout of such a major source of troops and equipment resulted in fourteen other nations leaving Somalia around the same time as the US, effectively ending any hopes of nation-building. The manhunt for Aidid was immediately called off and Aidid, perhaps sensing his victory, released his hostage, Michael Durant, a little over a week after the events. Much to the disgust of Rangers and Delta Force soldiers who had participated in the mission, Aidid's treatment by the US began to improve rapidly. Ironically, this was because of his perceived power and constituency in Somalia, at least partially re-created by the US reprisal attacks on south Mogadishu. On November 16, 1993, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 885, accepting that the exclusion of

Aidid from future Somali political negotiations was not feasible.<sup>164</sup> In December 1993, Aidid was flown in an American plane to new peace talks in Addis Ababa.<sup>165</sup> Although they usually remained on base or high above Mogadishu in planes and helicopters, American soldiers' relationship with Somalis remained at an all-time low. Peterson reports revenge killings of civilians and rules of engagement stretched to the limit by angry servicemen. Many simply couldn't understand what they were still doing in Somalia, given their lack of activity.<sup>166</sup>

Estimates have been made that during the UNITAF/UNOSOM II missions ninety percent of funding was spent on the military forces and operations themselves; just four and a half percent had trickled into the local Somali economy.<sup>167</sup> Additionally, the anti-Aidid battles had led to the destruction of yet more Somali infrastructure around Mogadishu. Because relations between UN troops and Somalis were so bad, soldiers had no idea where to donate leftovers from the mission. Many valuable medical supplies were destroyed because of this overall inability or unwillingness to communicate with Somali civilians and leaders. Many aid agencies packed up at the same time as the UN mission; they acknowledged that it had been a disaster and made conditions on the ground too hostile for them to stay.<sup>168</sup> In legislative terms, US Presidential Decision Directive 25, signed by President Clinton shortly after the Black Hawk events, resulted in the US administration placing restrictions on the amount of support and participation Americans would give to future humanitarian operations.<sup>169</sup>

A prominent opinion in the US towards the end of the Somalia mission and after the American pullout was that humanitarianism had gotten out of hand. That is to say, the mission had been undertaken without the rational 'goals', 'policies' and 'objectives' characteristic of 'good politics', or at least supposedly characteristic of the military effectiveness and efficiency for which the US wished its forces to be known in

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<sup>164</sup> Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 133.

<sup>165</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 150.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-149.

<sup>167</sup> Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State*, 231.

<sup>168</sup> Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, 152-153.

<sup>169</sup> Larry Minear, Colin Scott & Thomas Weiss, *The News Media, Civil War & Humanitarian Action* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 55.

the aftermath of their overwhelming technological and televisual victory in the 1991 Gulf War. The UN was often blamed for overstepping the reasonable bounds set by the actions of UNITAF and dragging US forces into unnecessary combat. Many Americans involved in the UNOSOM II mission scoff at these suggestions, however, pointing out that US Special Forces, who conducted the vast majority of the anti-Aidid raids, acted with specific orders from the Pentagon, without informing all UN personnel.

UNOSOM II's overwhelming management by Americans also challenges the idea that sections of the US government were not involved in deciding on the actions of American troops. This being said, a biographer of the Clinton presidency claims that Clinton himself had stopped monitoring the Somalia situation closely after the UNOSOM II takeover and thus was not fully aware of the military escalations in the hunt for Aidid during the summer of 1993. He was purportedly furious that he was not told about the 'Black Hawk down' mission and its potential downsides in advance; he is said to have thought the raid a 'dumb' idea and immediately suspected the UN was to blame for authorising it.<sup>170</sup>

In Somalia, the crippling of the UNOSOM II mission by the pullout of the Americans and a majority of other forces allowed the faction leaders, especially around Mogadishu, to return to their pre-intervention activities. Violence and skirmishing increased dramatically, prevented the remaining, mostly under-equipped troops from operating; the last of the UN troops were pulled out in March 1995. In a symbolic moment, the luxurious UN compound, complete with shopping mall, was vigorously looted down to its foundations by Somalis. "This represented a kind of literal 'dust to dust' as the international operations that had proudly heralded the 'new world order' were finally buried in Somalia."<sup>171</sup> Stevenson also notes that: "As its parting gesture, Washington donated five thousand M-16s, five thousand handguns, and nearly three million rounds of ammunition to outfit the new Somali police force. A few diplomats merely fretted that now they just had to trust the Somalis. The searing irony that it was

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<sup>170</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 317.

<sup>171</sup> Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 276.

precisely superpower profligacy with weapons that had greased Somalia's skid into hell to begin with was lost on Washington."<sup>172</sup> A new generation of Somali factional leaders would soon emerge in southern Somalia, rising to prominence through money made as scrap merchants and from forcefully acquiring sole access to profitable areas of the country such as ports, airports and farmlands.

While it has suffered continued violence in specific areas, particularly in and around Mogadishu, much of Somalia has achieved a degree of stability since the intervention period due to localized, cooperative efforts. The northern breakaway region of Somaliland escaped much of the violence in the south altogether and has been more successful in its efforts to establish a national governance structure for itself, with little to no external assistance.<sup>173</sup> Other areas exist under a mixture of factional and clan leadership, combined with Islamic law and judicial influences. Despite its creation in 2000, the success of a single Somali Transitional National Government has been hampered by its inability to raise significant international funds for development and services, internal opposition from some powerful factional groups, and the distrust of immediate neighbours such as Ethiopia, who are fearful of Somali interaction with the broader Islamic community.<sup>174</sup> Although formal government structures have struggled and thus far failed to establish themselves, as Paul Lowe commented frequently during his interview, many economic and social functions of Somali life, such as the *khat* trade, were not brought to a halt by the civil war and intervention violence and continued with important effects throughout, whether these systems were recognised by UN and US interveners or not.<sup>175</sup>

With first Western and then all UN troops out of the country, Somalia's seemingly ongoing and repetitive story of violence and in-fighting no longer had appeal for Western media or policymakers. The stateless territory was left to its own devices, with little evidence remaining of the US/UN missions at all. Despite its

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<sup>172</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 110.

<sup>173</sup> Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?*, 139-148.

<sup>174</sup> Shaul Shay, *The Red Sea Terror Triangle: Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Islamic Terror* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 87-88.

<sup>175</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

disastrous exit, however, there is little question that America has learned much from its failed intervention in Somalia. A primary lesson, according to Stevenson, has been that the Powell-Weinberger doctrine of applying overwhelming force to a situation for a 'quick win' does not necessarily apply well to the complex political, social and economic problems of 'The New World Order'. Troops entering such situations must be as competent in close urban conflict, intelligence gathering and winning 'hearts and minds' as they are at operating high tech military equipment.<sup>176</sup> Hirsch and Oakley also cite American concern with rigidity and bureaucracy at the UN, which it feels must learn to better coordinate participants in peacekeeping ventures.<sup>177</sup> Evidence of these new approaches and attitudes clearly emerges when the American approach to the Iraq war of 2003 is considered, as will be seen in Chapter Six, which is focused on the Fallujah, Iraq case study.

Somalia has only recently returned to marginal media awareness, as it has become known as a lawless hiding and breeding ground for Islamic terrorism. The threat from Somalia is now presented as potentially having spill-over effects for the international community, rather than its anarchic state simply damaging conditions of life for those within its borders.<sup>178</sup> While Somalia's unpatrolled and porous boundaries may allow the entry of Muslim extremists, the majority of the population itself has not traditionally practiced or supported fundamentalist forms of Islam. The success of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in and around Mogadishu has likely been due to the civilian population's desire for law, order and basic service provision. Created by a group of Mogadishu businessmen after the failure of a UN-supported Transitional National Government (TNG) meeting in February 2006, the Union have helped to prevent banditry, re-open some schools, and allow aid agencies to operate in the southern and central regions of Somalia. Since its creation, the TNG has been primarily based in the town of Baidoa, a significant journey from Mogadishu, and has not been

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<sup>176</sup> Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing US Policy in Somalia*, 165.

<sup>177</sup> See Chapter 8 in Hirsch & Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*.

<sup>178</sup> For example, see the introduction to Shaul Shay, *The Red Sea Terror Triangle*, ix-xi.

powerful or popular enough to undertake much national rebuilding. Factional leaders are seen by most of the Somali population as corrupt and have done little to assist with social redevelopment, rendering themselves unpopular.<sup>179</sup>

Despite acceptance of the UIC by much of southern Somalia's population, the American government, groups within the UN, and Ethiopia are said to be unhappy with the rise of Islamic influence in the territory and the US, among others, is rumoured to be funding some of Mogadishu's factional leaders to fight against the UIC.<sup>180</sup> Areas of southern Somalia deemed to be 'terrorist' hideouts have been bombed by Ethiopian planes, supported by American technology, and unrest is spreading again following Ethiopian troops' entry into the country in an effort to re-install the TNG in Mogadishu. Life for Somali citizens thus continues to be significantly effected by geopolitical forces, despite long periods of neglect by much of the world community. Both case studies used for this project are now caught up in aspects of 'the war on terror', and directions this discourse takes will likely have major impacts on them.

The next two chapters will overlay predominant media representations of the Somalia intervention onto the basic frame of the history that has been presented here. This primarily academic history of Somalia has provided a sense of the ways in which the country has been understood in the West by those who have chosen to study it at various depths. As will be seen when the focus is on media representations, many details of this already generalized history are lost in the coverage, resulting in an even more selective narrative of Somalia during the time of the intervention. The history of the intervention above hints at the complexity of the situation in Somalia, the range of policy options available, and the gradual narrowing of this range which occurred due to a myriad of interpretative, bureaucratic, financial and geopolitical factors. When this history is compared to the narrative presented by selected Western media outlets, the reductive and selective nature of the coverage themes should become clearer.

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<sup>179</sup> Michael Shank, "The Future of Political Islam in Somalia", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, <http://www.fpiif.org/fpiftxt/3872> (accessed July 4, 2007).

<sup>180</sup> Emily Wax & Karen DeYoung, "US Secretly Backing Warlords in Somalia", *The Washington Post Online*, May 17, 2006, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051601625\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/16/AR2006051601625_pf.html) (accessed July 4, 2007).



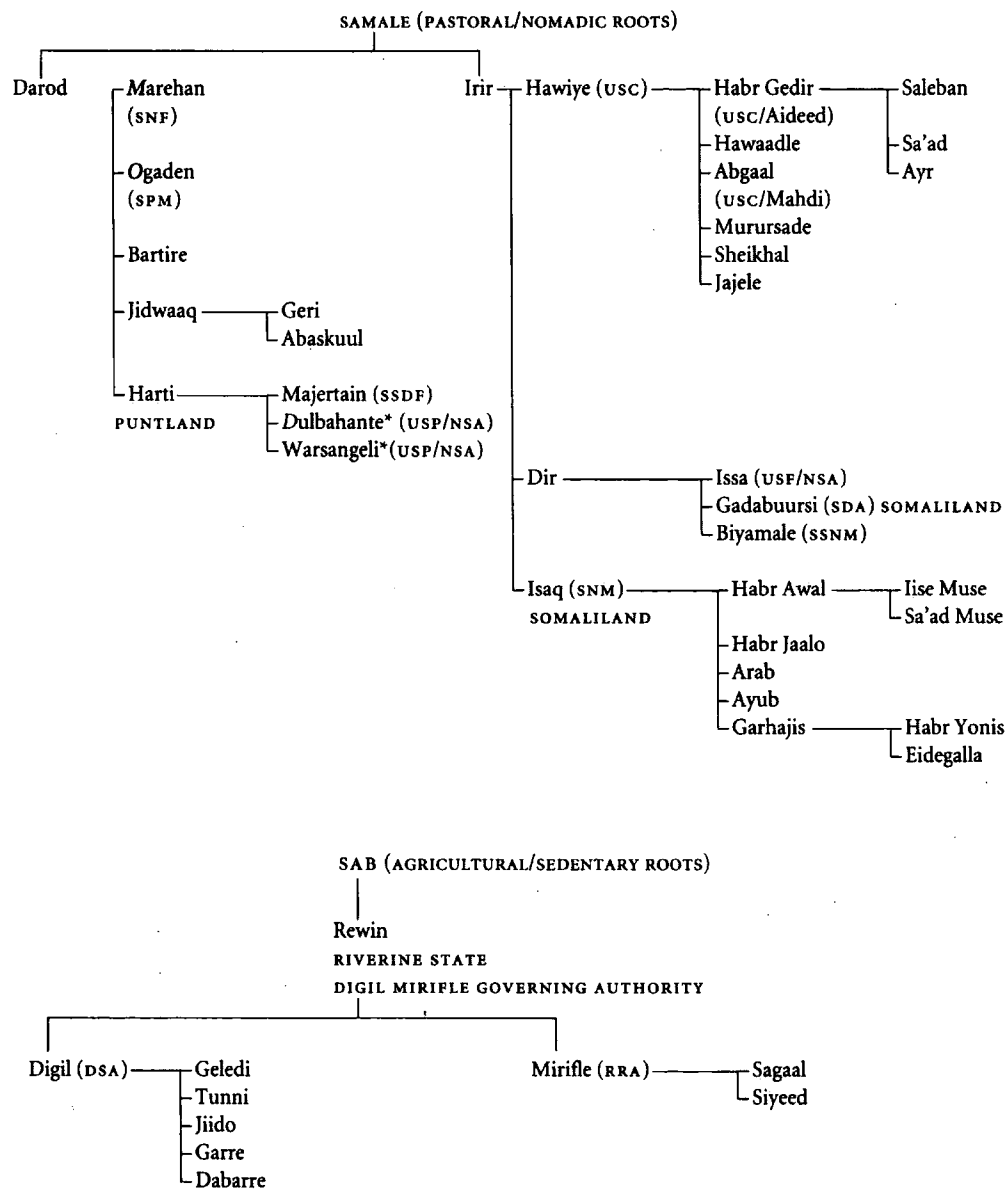
**Figure 3:** Somali states & regions, 2002.  
From: I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (Oxford: J. Currey, 2002).





**Figure 4:** Somali ethnic & clan-family distribution, 2002.  
 From: I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (Oxford: J. Currey, 2002).





There are obviously more sub-clans and lineages than the ones listed above. This diagram includes those clans/lineages that are mentioned in the text.

MOD: Clan power base of Siyad Barre

(SNM): Abbreviation of politico-military faction

PUNTLAND: Clan background of state formation processes

\* Divided loyalty between Puntland and Somaliland

**Figure 5:** Somali clan structure.  
 From: Maria Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State: Somalia From Statelessness to Statelessness?* (Utrecht: International Books, 2001).

## Chapter Four – From Beachhead to ‘Black Hawk Down’: Somalia & ‘Africa’; ‘Dark’ Places, ‘Failed’ States

This chapter will begin analysing the Somalia case study through an exploration of some major narrative and visual themes in selected media coverage of the 1992-1993 US/UN intervention. As was outlined in Chapter One, for the purposes of this project textual and visual discourses of Somalia are primarily understood as having developed through dynamic processes of creation, alteration and reinforcement of particular understandings between Western media, policymakers and commentators on the events, various organisations and media audiences. Deconstructing predominant discourse themes used by Western media can highlight how decisions to understand the Somali conflict in specific ways precluded and in several cases actively silenced alternative possibilities.

While they will discuss the types of information that British and American media coverage failed to provide to public consumers<sup>1</sup>, the chapters analysing media coverage of the Somalia intervention will be structured around the powerful and enduring discourses which the coverage regularly drew upon and reinforced. Discursive trends will be divided into two major categories: “Somalia & ‘Africa’: ‘Dark’ Places, ‘Failed’ States” and “Stereotypes in Somalia: Passive Victims, Aggressive Killers and Their ‘Saviours’”, with an important sub-category, “Aidid: ‘the man who makes Somalia worse’”. This chapter, “Somalia & ‘Africa’”, will deal specifically with representations of ‘Somalia’ as a place. The two following categorizations, which deal with representations of people, will be analysed in the following chapter. “Somalia & ‘Africa’” and “Stereotypes in Somalia”, the two dominant theme categories, will be broken down into smaller sub-sections for closer analysis. The categories of ‘place’ and ‘people’ have been broadly used to structure coverage in both case studies because they are routinely the building blocks of media items. While some stories often emphasize the description of particular individual ‘characters’, group characteristics or human

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<sup>1</sup> See Frank J. Stech, “Winning CNN Wars”, *Parameters*, Autumn (1994): 37-56.

interactions, others are geared to explanation and categorization of a place, be it historically, geographically, politically etc. The two are also routinely interlinked. The citizens of a particular 'place' thus tend to be imbued with certain characteristics deemed to be broadly representative of this area, for example. In terms of photographic history, these two categories also 'capture' common subject matter in Western imagery: landscapes and portraiture. A survey of the analysed coverage indicates that these are important visual elements of both case studies.

A brief introduction before the coverage analysis will illustrate how discursive media strategies helped to delimit what their viewers know about 'Somalia'. Borrowing concepts from David Campbell's work, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia*, 'Somalia' will be understood in this analysis through exploration of the ways in which media images and narratives problematized it as an entity. The term 'problematization' in this sense refers to the ways in which elements constituted as 'part of' or 'related to' Somalia were defined and understood in order for the 'problem' of Somalia to be approached.<sup>2</sup> These considerations are particularly relevant given how little was generally known about Somalia in the Western world, before and after the intervention. Somalia literally had to be created as a 'place' in the eyes of Western audiences and the media had considerable freedom, due to almost non-existent bases of knowledge, to do this.

A general lack of knowledge about Somalia's history, as was briefly outlined in the previous chapter, often led to representation of the country as yet another example of 'Africa', a concept which is more established in Western imaginations. In opposition to a strongly-differentiated 'First World', 'Africa' has been routinely represented as violent, undeveloped and perpetually in need of outside aid. In the case of Somalia, when external intervention did not result in immediate improvements in the country, declarations of its 'hopelessness' were rapidly made, suggesting that this 'failed' state was not prepared for a peaceful existence. While some media coverage did recognise

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<sup>2</sup> David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), x.

and comment on the negative effects of past external involvement in the country, particularly during the Cold War, this history was rarely explored in depth, leaving Western audiences to assume that there was little to connect 'their' world with that of 'war-torn' Somalia.

Media coverage of the intervention therefore acted to both highlight certain discourses while restricting others, functioning for audiences as a way of seeing which of a limited range of possibilities would 'play itself out' 'in the end' in Somalia. The use of such mildly cinematic or theatrical terms is important; images from the media, and later film, were the only means by which the vast majority of Westerners experienced Somalia. In this sense, Thomas Keenan's article focusing on the mediatized Mogadishu beach landings is relevant for the entire discussion of Somalia intervention images. Keenan views the actions/events of the Somalia intervention as being undertaken not solely to accomplish the tactical aims of restoring a measure of safety, food and governance to the Somali people. These actions were also undertaken, and specifically rendered into media images and narratives, to tell Western audiences a story about America, and broadly 'the West', and its values and position in the immediate post-Cold War period.

Moments when the 'creation' of Somalia by Western media was particularly obvious are thus important for exposing 'the West's' role in simultaneously constructing both 'Somalia' and its own identity. In many ways, the greatest strains between the media and the military came when this reality was made too obvious, with the initial landing in Mogadishu being a clear example. According to Keenan, "Glare, or what the [New York] *Times* called 'too bright a light', means the becoming public of the effort at publicity, the live coverage not of the landing, but of the live coverage."<sup>3</sup> In these moments, the 'created' rather than any 'given' nature of 'Somalia' becomes more visible.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Keenan, "Live From...", in *Back to the Front: Tourisms of War* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 149.

## A 'Failed' State: Placing Somalia

In the coverage studied, two general ways of understanding 'responsibility' with regards to Somalia emerged. Although the issue of responsibility was a popular element of media and academic representation of Somalia, some more extreme discourses did not deal with this concept at all, viewing the events as outside any such notions. Somalia, a part of 'Africa', was simply like this, with 'like this' meaning violent, undemocratic and primitive. If Somalia was primordially and unchangingly 'like this', responsibility and agency were not relevant concepts and involvement in any meaningful sense between 'the West' and Somalia would be useless. While some examples of this strong fatalism are evident in analysed media coverage, most fits somewhere in between, positioning Somalia as responsible for its own disasters yet also a victim of Cold War geopolitics, for whom 'the New World Order' should take responsibility.

Tied into these discourses of responsibility were questions of value: Somalia was unquestionably a humanitarian disaster but was it a disaster of enough global significance to warrant intervention? Such wider conceptual discussions can be closely linked in policy terms to America's own uncertainty about its new national roles in the post-Cold War world order. Were internal conflicts in countries now perceived as unimportant America's prerogative to solve through multilateral work with international institutions like the UN or were these complex problems better left to the affected state's own citizens or a single state actor to deal with? Was a mission in Somalia to be a broad-based, long-term commitment to nation-building or just humanitarian aid? These strategic debates remained ongoing and unresolved between the various personalities, bureaucratic bodies and international institutions involved in Somalia and media coverage picks up on these multiple, and sometimes contradictory, possibilities.

The overarching discourse of 'failed states' pervades the entire spectrum of understandings mentioned above and is a crucial feature of Somalia's representation by many Western media, academics and policymakers. The first academic use of the term

appears to have happened in a *Foreign Policy* journal article, entitled "Saving Failed States", published in the winter of 1992-1993 during the height of the Somalia intervention.<sup>4</sup> Use of the term proliferated after this point in academic, policymaking and public circles; terminology around the discourse became established, much of it based on metaphors of personal 'health' and 'illness'.<sup>5</sup> Much academic literature on 'failed states' was not published until after the Somalia intervention had ended; the country was, in fact, cited as a prime example of the concept. Discussion of issues resulting from decolonisation and Cold War practices, however, were already regular media features during the intervention period, as will be evident in analysed coverage. 'Failed state' discourses were crucial elements of theoretical debates about the apparent collapse into self-destruction of a sizable group of countries at the advent of a 'New World Order' but also of 'practical' attempts to develop standard criteria for how to classify and repair these political entities.

In February 1994, in the wake of the Somalia intervention, an article entitled "The Coming Anarchy" was published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. It was soon faxed to American embassies around the world as essential reading. The article, by well-travelled foreign correspondent Robert Kaplan, outlined in detail the horrors of an increasingly poor, urban, violent, and disease-ridden 'Africa'. Despite the article's publication after the Somalia intervention and its primary focus on West Africa as opposed to the Horn, many of the sentiments expressed have strong resonance with discourses which surrounded events in Somalia a few months earlier. Kaplan believes that "We are entering a bifurcated world. Part of the globe is inhabited by Hegel's and Fukuyama's Last Man, healthy, well-fed, and pampered by technology. The other, larger, part is inhabited by Hobbes's First Man, condemned to a life that is 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'"<sup>6</sup> This polarised world, however, is not presented as one in which the divides between these two kinds of 'men' may be bridged. The article instead

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald B. Helman & Steven R. Ratner, "Saving Failed States", *Foreign Policy* 89, Winter (1992-1993): 3-20.

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent example of this, see Jean-Germain Gros, "Towards a taxonomy of failed states in the New World Order: Decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti", *Third World Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1996): 455-471.

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2, February (1994): 60.

functions as a warning to First World readers, who must recognise that their way of life is increasingly threatened by the poor and disenfranchised. 'The New World Order' is a space of myriad and diffuse threats, which appear to require management and containment before engagement.

The Kaplan article touches upon but neglects to explore in depth the complex web of interaction and connection between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds, particularly in economic and political senses.<sup>7</sup> Resistant cultural divides between 'us' and 'them' are given primary importance, illustrated in Kaplan's general support of Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory.<sup>8</sup> In a similar manner, the principles of non-intervention held by the UN, upon which the differentiation for a 'New World Order' of international involvement was often based, fail to recognise much of international practice at a bilateral level. During the Cold War, various forms of military, economic, social and political intervention took place beyond UN auspices and continue to take place in the present.

Although these new discourses of 'failed states' and 'coming anarchy' were widely accepted, they did not necessarily replace older understandings of the state system, which often merely adopted some of the new terms. Somalia was often also understood through narratives of 'Vietnam', a 'quagmire' in an unimportant state that would drag the US into an unwanted and long-term relationship with a developing country. A nostalgia for the Cold War itself was occasionally evident in media items bemoaning new situations of 'ethnic' or 'tribal' chaos, supposedly released from dormancy by the ending of old Cold War relationships.

A variety of coverage styles and representations of Somalia find bases and justification in the 'failed state' discourses and illustrate the pervasive level of fatalism that existed regarding the situation of the country. In media coverage, the civil war and

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<sup>7</sup> Kaplan's article is very detailed and informative, but neglects to illustrate Western involvement in Africa's situation. For example, Kaplan details the destruction of primary rainforests and the sale of the timber, but the description stops at African ports. The destination of this raw material is not given and the economies which fuel demand for it are not explained.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations?" article, published in *Foreign Affairs*, 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993) suggests that "World politics is entering a new phase...The great divisions between humankind and the dominating source of international conflict will be cultural", 22.

conflict were simultaneously hyped up through widespread quoting of humanitarian disaster figures while comments were also repetitively made, in both explicit and subtle ways, about Somalia's unimportance on a global scale. While reports on the possibilities of 'saving' Somalia through the use of well-armed and equipped US soldiers were occasionally published and aired, these did little to ease the suspicions of many commentators that Somalia would soon be left to its own devices. The clash of views between hopeful liberal interveners and those cynical about the likelihood for success of multilateral endeavours is evident during these discussions, although specific media commentators often changed their views from day to day. In-depth engagement with particular trends in coverage which relate to the abovementioned themes of responsibility, 'failed states' and fatalism will now be undertaken, using examples from selected media coverage.

### **Responsibility & the 'Failed' State**

For those who wished to see states like Somalia 'saved', a more accepting geopolitical climate led to various practical suggestions of actions that the UN could take to promote peace in conflict areas. Analysed coverage of the Somalia intervention began with a *New York Times* article, written by Senators Nancy Kassebaum and Paul Simon in early 1992. They called on the UN to appoint a full-time special envoy to Somalia and adopt a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire and arms embargo on Somalia.<sup>9</sup> Another article in *The Times* of London on January 2, 1992 echoes the urgency mentioned above regarding the UN's possible functions in a 'New World Order' and is optimistic about its possibilities:

Boutros Boutros-Ghali...takes over as the United Nations secretary-general at a time when the UN has never before commanded such international support or faced challenges in so many parts of the world...The revitalised world body is playing a central role in brokering ceasefires, supervising the deployment of peacekeeping

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Kassebaum & Paul Simon, "Save Somalia From Itself", *The New York Times*, January 2, 1992.



forces and organising humanitarian missions to help the victims of war and famine.<sup>10</sup>

As illustrated in the introduction above, however, this new optimism was often accompanied by a sense of growing risk and threat. In a proclaimed 'new' period of global optimism and opportunity, there was clearly the potential for 'failed' states to remain in crisis as well to succeed with multilateral assistance.<sup>11</sup>

Historical events in Somalia were often briefly called upon in media coverage of conflict there to illustrate a sense of hopelessness, reminiscent of the Kaplan article. A cynical features piece in *The Times* explains that "Ethiopia and Somalia took advantage of global naval competition between the superpowers to lease their coastlines in return for modern weapons...Now the Cold War is over both have been left to their own devices, engulfed by famine and anomy."<sup>12</sup> A *New York Times* editorial on February 9, 1992 also expresses horror and doubt about the Somali conflict, calling it a "senseless war between rival clans waged by teenagers with automatic weapons."<sup>13</sup> While insisting that it is "morally and politically unthinkable" for the world not to try and save Somalia from "national suicide", the article also states that "it is far from clear what the world can do" but warns that "chaos and famine will certainly spread" if action isn't taken.

These articles are a reflection of the tone of the infrequent coverage during the first few months of 1992, when international recognition of the Somali crisis began to garner media attention. Despite escalating levels of violence and civilian suffering in Somalia throughout 1990 and 1991, media reporting had been minimal until this point for a variety of reasons, explored in the previous chapter. Reports on events in Somalia tended to be short and merely outline factual information that could be gathered from outside the country such as the beginning or cessation of fighting, estimated numbers

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Binyon, "Daunting Challenges Face Boutros Ghali", *The Times*, January 2, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> See Gearoid O'Tuathail, 'The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millenium', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 1, March (2000): 166-167. O'Tuathail shows that discourse change doesn't necessarily equal abandonment of old ideas.

<sup>12</sup> "Africa's Patrons Depart", *The Times*, January 24, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> "Help Needed for Forsaken Somalia", *The New York Times*, February 9, 1992.

of casualties in fighting and a few sentences on why fighting was occurring in Somalia. As the UN began to become involved in Somali affairs again in early 1992, some longer media reports began to suggest a variety of approaches for dealing with Somalia's conflict. Doubt and pessimism were expressed, however, about whether the implementation of any of these options would actually be undertaken and, if action was taken, how it might work to create viable improvement. *New York Times* articles which mention the ongoing fighting in Mogadishu despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement in early February 1992 by Ali Mahdi and Aidid provide a setting for this pessimism.

*The New York Times* reported UN official James Jonah as being "exasperated by the unrelenting fighting in the Somali capital". Jonah warned the two sides in a paternalistic matter that such "behaviour" could be punished by a withholding of aid: "It should not be taken for granted that the international community, in the face of such behaviour, will continue to exert all efforts to bring food to Mogadishu when there are equally competing demands in other parts of the world."<sup>14</sup> Articles such as this one, which indicated that it was the responsibility of Somalis to create a basic situation of peace before the UN could start its work, often alternated with ones which highlighted American reluctance for the UN to become involved in peacekeeping in Somalia. In late April 1992, *The New York Times* reported that Security Council plans to send a force of 500 armed troops to protect relief workers in Mogadishu had been put on hold due to American reluctance to fund these numbers and that a force of fifty unarmed military observers would be sent instead.<sup>15</sup>

The UN's lack of commitment to Somalia was noted by both Somali citizens and aid agencies who had worked in the state throughout the civil war. Articles during the early stages of international involvement in the Somalia crisis alternately blamed this failure on disorganisation and excessive bureaucracy within the UN system or highlighted the ways in which the Western powers on the Security Council, especially

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<sup>14</sup> "UN Halted By Somalia Shelling, Says Food Relief Could End", *The New York Times*, March 7, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Lewis, "Reined In By US, UN Limits Mission to Somalia", *The New York Times*, April 26, 1992.

the US, were not meeting their financial, military and moral responsibilities to 'The New World Order'. Sam Kiley, writing for *The Times* on July 6, 1992, quotes the director of a key aid agency in Somalia as saying: "I doubt that the UN has the will to really follow things through. It is clear that armed UN soldiers would get shot and killed after a while and then they would run away leaving more chaos behind them than there is already if that is conceivable."<sup>16</sup> There was only a brief announcement in *The New York Times* of the early June 1992 arrival of observers. Although the observers were "cordially greeted and wished well in their work", the article also declares that "more than 30,000 people, mostly women and children" have been killed in the Mogadishu fighting and Somalia remains "carved into fiefdoms of clan warlords"<sup>17</sup>, an ominous-sounding situation which is not further elaborated. Again, the quoting of such figures and statements tended to highlight the large scale of the Somali crisis rather than inspiring confidence in UN efforts to improve the situation.

There is a strong sense, again reminiscent of Kaplan, in many of the articles published in mid-1992 that the situation in Somalia was to be expected, given that this state is part of the African continent, a place historically perceived to be full of chaos and human tragedy. The implication appears to be that Somalia was not a particularly hopeful case for international intervention; at its most extreme, such actions are perceived to be futile due to Somalia's inherent tendency to violence. A June 7, 1992 article in *The Times* describes the plight of thousands of Somali refugees pouring over the Kenyan border but expands on its description of the difficult situation of the refugees to comment on the state of most of Africa: "While the never-ending horrors of the Horn of Africa make it into the headlines, other conflicts, mostly tribal in origin, are flaring across the continent, including in Kenya itself."<sup>18</sup> A long *New York Times* article by Jane Perlez, published in May 1992, calls states such as Somalia and Ethiopia "orphans of the post-Cold-War era". While she points out that the new strategic unimportance of these states for Russia and the US means that many African despots

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<sup>16</sup> Sam Kiley, "UN Observer Team Arrives in Somalia to Mixed Reception", *The Times*, July 6, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> "UN Truce Observers Reach Somali Capital", *The New York Times*, July 6, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> "Ragged Refugees Flood Into Kenya", *The Times*, June 7, 1992.

may no longer be able to play one superpower against another and may therefore fall due to lack of external support, Perlez also quotes African leaders who are not optimistic about many African states' abilities to create new democratic opportunities for themselves.<sup>19</sup> There is discussion, both in Perlez's article and in academic and policy literature, about the need for African-designed and implemented solutions, rather than strategies driven by outside powers. This seemingly anti-colonial impetus, however, was occasionally read as neglectful by those arguing that African state problems were being ignored by the rest of the world. Paul Lewis, writing for *The New York Times*, notes that: "For officials of African and other third-world countries, America's reluctance to see the United Nations get involved in Somalia smacks of racism because they remember how it encouraged the Security Council to rush a 14,000-strong peacekeeping force into Yugoslavia at a cost of \$630 million earlier this year, when civil war erupted in that European country."<sup>20</sup>

The sentiments in this article and a further editorial piece in *The New York Times* are predictive of a larger debate which developed in July and August 1992, as tension rose between Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council over the body's apparent lack of commitment to Africa in general. According to a *New York Times* article,

Mr. Boutros-Ghali challenged the Security Council's decision to expand the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia if this was to occur at the expense of urgently needed peacekeeping and relief operations in black Africa...the dispute has festered and at times has erupted into a collision of cultures between the Secretary General, who feels compelled to speak for the less powerful nations of the third world, and the Western powers who dominate the Security Council.<sup>21</sup>

Media coverage articulated the views of various policymakers and journalists, illustrating the broad scope of sometimes-conflicting perspectives on Western policy towards Africa which were circulating at this time. Conflicts and schisms largely

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<sup>19</sup> Jane Perlez, "After the Cold War: Views From Africa; Stranded by Superpowers, Africa Seeks an Identity", *The New York Times*, May 17, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lewis, "Reined In By US, UN Limits Mission To Somalia", *The New York Times*, April 26, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, "UN Chief's Dispute With Council Boils Over", *The New York Times*, August 3, 1992.

reflected divides between liberal interventionists, intervention sceptics, and those strongly against humanitarian intervention. While intervention scepticism was based on a large variety of concerns, the preponderance of fatalism and cynicism based on the casting of Somalia as 'beyond' hope of Western aid, rather than illustrations of how it was perhaps receiving ineffective forms of Western assistance, tended to mean that binary divisions between 'Somalia/Africa' and 'the West' were reinforced. The ways in which this binary was perpetuated will be explored in further sections below.

### **'Discovering' Famine: Death Statistics & Moral Comparisons**

The fervency of the debate on if and how to intervene in Somalia was likely intensified by the increase in media coverage of humanitarian conditions in the country as 1992 progressed. Shortly after complications in negotiations with General Aidid prevented the fifty person observer team from patrolling, Jane Perlez wrote an article filled with dire quotes from Red Cross officials. The Red Cross was among the most respected of aid agencies working in Somalia, as it remained in the country throughout the entire civil war in areas where many other agencies refused to operate. A well-quoted figure of approximately thirty thousand deaths in the Mogadishu fighting prior to the March 1992 ceasefire had been used by media in the early months of 1992 to represent numerically the scale of the humanitarian disaster in Somalia. However, the Geneva-based director general of the Red Cross announced to Perlez in mid-July that

the land, sea and air operation that has brought a meal a day to 500,000 Somalis was proving insufficient. 'Another 500,000 will starve if our program is not doubled immediately.'...Dr. Fuchs [the director general] described conditions in Somalia, a mostly desert country of about 5 million people on the Horn of Africa, as a 'disaster' and 'quantitatively' much worse than that in the former Yugoslav republics.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Jane Perlez, "UN Observers Delay Visit to Somalia", *The New York Times*, July 12, 1992.

Further new and powerful figures emerged in this article, where realisation of previously undisclosed suffering in the countryside outside Mogadishu emerged. Dr. Fuchs estimated that two and a half million Somalis in rural areas were “wandering in search of food and safety” and in certain particularly hard-hit areas, like the former-farming town of Baidoa, severe malnutrition rates were at eighty to ninety percent.<sup>23</sup>

A few days later, Perlez wrote a more descriptive article, which appears to have been influenced by the legendary Michael Buerk commentary from Korem, Ethiopia during the infamous 1984 famine in that country<sup>24</sup>:

In the damp, gray dawn in this remote Somali bush town, 25,000 men, women and children, their rib cages protruding, their eyes listless, shuffled with their last bit of strength today toward outdoor kitchens for a scoop of food. Hundreds, too feeble to eat, died while they waited... ‘Here is hell’, said Mr. Loane, [a Red Cross official] who worked in Ethiopia during the 1984-85 famine. ‘I thought I would never see Ethiopia again, and I didn’t think we would allow it to happen again.’ Red Cross officials say they believe about one-third of Somalia’s people, estimated to number anywhere from 4.5 to 6 million, are likely to die in the next six months unless more food is pumped into the country.<sup>25</sup>

The comparison between Somalia and Ethiopia was intensified by the fact that, according to Red Cross estimates, Somalia faced a greater absolute and proportional famine threat than its infamous neighbour, known primarily to the West for its mediatized famine in the 1980s. The numerical scale and qualitative description of suffering in Somalia was thus dramatically increased at this point. Mention is also made of a severe drought taking place across all of Eastern Africa, again expanding the horrors outwards to encompass more of ‘Africa’ generally. Perlez does, however, make clear that the Somali famine has developed primarily due to ongoing internal fighting,

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<sup>23</sup> Jane Perlez, “UN Observers Delay Visit to Somalia”, *The New York Times*, July 12, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> On October 24, 1984, BBC reporter Michael Buerk and cameraman Mohamed Amin exposed humanitarian suffering in Ethiopia to Western publics. Buerk opened his narrative to Amin’s footage, “Dawn, and as the sun breaks through the piercing chill of night on the plain outside Korem it lights up a biblical famine, here, in the Twentieth Century,” [www.randomhouse.co.uk/minisites/road\\_taken/](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/minisites/road_taken/) (accessed April 25, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Jane Perlez, “Deaths in Somalia Outpace Delivery of Food”, *The New York Times*, July 19, 1992.

which has made the delivery of food extremely difficult, thus returning to more specified discussion of the Somali situation. The media's general belief in the power of numbers to make human suffering significant in developing countries is evident in the article. It quotes figures on the numbers of people in the feeding camp mentioned, the number of people who have died in Baidoa alone, total numbers of Somalis at risk in the country, numbers of displaced persons and refugees, numbers of Red Cross feeding centres and the thirty thousand figure for deaths due to fighting in Mogadishu.

The impact of this article on further coverage of the Somalia famine appears to have been significant. The dramatic increase in numbers of potential disaster victims and the authority of a key Red Cross figure in making these statements likely helped to provide media with important quotable 'sound bites' and gave justification to policymakers who supported taking action. The figure of one third of the Somali population at risk of death began to be used routinely in following *New York Times* articles; mentions of the famine as perpetuated by the inability of relief agencies to deliver aid in dangerous conditions also became common. As more journalists travelled to Somalia to get the story 'live', television images and items began to emerge alongside press articles and 'first hand' styles of reporting appeared more often. *The Times* of London published a similar article to Perlez's, which additionally brought individual accounts of the human suffering in Somalia to the forefront. Sam Kiley opened an August 4, 1992 *Times* article by describing the plight of six-year-old Nor Isaq, the only member of his family to avoid starvation. Kiley also estimated that one and a half million, or about one third, of the Somali population was at risk of starving and detailed the struggles of Red Cross officials to transport food to the needy without it being looted.<sup>26</sup>

Strongly-worded articles about the devastation in Somalia and reluctance, particularly American, to fund a UN mission there encouraged media debate and speculation about why there appeared to be little Western interest in 'saving' this 'failed' state. Throughout the summer of 1992 rhetoric about the scale of the disaster

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<sup>26</sup> Sam Kiley, "Orphaned Somali Children Wait For Their Turn to Die", *The Times*, August 4, 1992.

remained dramatic, with the UN joining the Red Cross in calling Somalia the worst humanitarian situation in the world.<sup>27</sup> Shortly after Perlez's story, a *New York Times* editorial bemoaned: "war, drought, the collapse of civil authority: these are the malign toxins that threaten the very existence of Somalia, a husk of a country on the Horn of Africa." The article calls on Western powers, especially the US, to endorse Boutros-Ghali's idea of a UN quick-reaction peacekeeping force and warns that as George Bush says nothing about the proposal "a third of a country inches toward the grave."<sup>28</sup>

An editorial piece in mid-August used less dire vocabulary but also appealed for a moral basis to American policy on Africa, which it claimed was not being implemented due to racism and ignorance. A comparison to the situation in Bosnia was made, which was unsurprising given Boutros-Ghali's earlier comments on the disparity of responses to these cases of state collapse and their existence as simultaneous media 'events'. "Civil war and unconscionable internment in Bosnia seem man-made evils, subject to man-made solutions. But Africa is a mystery to our Eurocentric nation, even to many African-Americans. Its troubles seem like Old Testament plagues, irresolvable and inevitable."<sup>29</sup> While the moral impetus for the West to help Africa is still present in the article and there is some attempt to explore the 'othering' of this continent's problems by Western commentators and audiences, there remains a tendency to re-state, rather than challenge, the exceptional nature of Somali, and 'African' violence. The article offers vivid descriptions of how Africa is imaged and imagined by 'the West' but does not offer alternative ways of interpreting the conflict there which might challenge these dichotomies.

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<sup>27</sup> This statement was allegedly first made in early 1992 by Andrew Natsios, Director of the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, but was not widely commented upon since the OFDA was a small bureaucratic body in Washington without considerable influence at high government levels. See Africa Watch & Physicians for Human Rights, *Somalia, No Mercy in Mogadishu: The Human Cost of the Conflict and The Struggle for Relief*, Human Rights Watch publications, March 26, 1992, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/> (accessed September 19, 2007) and Steven Livingston & Todd Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy: the CNN Effect Reconsidered", *Political Communication* 12, no. 4 (1995): 413-429 for more on Andrew Natsios.

<sup>28</sup> "The Hell Called Somalia", *The New York Times*, July 23, 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Quindlen, "Public & Private: Somalia's Plagues", *The New York Times*, August 12, 1992.



A *Times* piece published around the same time also attempts to go beyond merely reporting the 'facts' of the Somalia situation to explore the question of compassion fatigue in terms of ongoing images of suffering in Somalia and Bosnia. It discusses the importance of images of children, who are often portrayed as innocent victims of violence who are outside the politics of a conflict and have a moral claim to aid and compassion. The author points out the different ways in which European versus African disaster images are understood; she argues that African child images tend to alienate rather than arouse compassion. While it is claimed that the aid community has done much to try to change this image of an 'othered', destroyed Africa, beyond the reach of Western aid, there is again little optimism that audiences are able to look beyond the allegedly obvious plight of a needy child to the deeper complexities of conflict situations and there are no suggestions for how this predominant style of imagery might be challenged or changed.<sup>30</sup>

A *New York Times* article in early September also asks the question: "Would the signals have excited journalists more if they had come from somewhere else instead of, yet again, black Africa? Just more pictures of flies on sickly black faces?"<sup>31</sup> The article moves on to claim that no "catharsis" is available for audiences viewing the Somali crisis because over half the food sent by donors is looted "to enrich the thugs who are responsible for the massacre." The moral impetus to act and to question existing, and potentially damaging, images of Africa is again slightly diminished by a sense of the Somali disaster as beyond the scale of possible aid or as one more crisis on a continent full of such crises. The mentioning of 'thugs' stealing food aid can also be seen as functioning to remind readers of the futility of aid efforts and the greed of segments of the Somali population, who are positioned as undeserving of aid. Contemporaneous with the publication of these articles discussing representations of Africa, the potential numerical scale of the Somali tragedy was predicted to have increased, although estimates of numbers at risk soon returned to the well-quoted, if vague, one third of

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<sup>30</sup> Patricia Holland, "Taking a Picture of Pain", *The Times*, August 25, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Goodman, "Critic's Notebook: Why It Took TV So Long To Focus On The Somalis", *The New York Times*, September 2, 1992.

four and a half to six million figure. A short August 7, 1992 article in *The New York Times* raised the risk of starvation number from one-third to two-thirds of the Somali population, estimated at seven million total.<sup>32</sup> *The Times* also briefly upped its predicted numbers of Somalis at risk to nearly three-quarters of a population of eight million.<sup>33</sup> Although it may have been coincidental and merely an accidental recording of figures, this occurrence again highlights the perceived importance of numbers in representing Somalia's suffering to the outside world.

In general, while the summer 1992 period of media coverage appears to be important in terms of an increase in media, policymakers', and likely public, awareness of events in Somalia, the content of articles appears primarily focused on the quoting of dramatic death and suffering statistics. Stories that personalised these numbers, and articles which attempted to discuss the ways in which coverage was being presented, continued to rely on vocabulary which encouraged understandings of the horrors of conditions in Somalia in ways that seemed to indicate that there was little possibility for improvement and change in the country.

### **Fatalism vs. Western 'Saviours'**

As the above section has suggested, the overriding sense of fatalism in much media coverage of Somalia is often related to the frequent citing of dramatic humanitarian statistics. This style of presentation routinely involved a heavy emphasis on the overwhelming nature of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia; some editorialised items actually stated that Somalia appeared a 'hopeless' case and that efforts by the international community to assist its people were futile. When the inevitability of Somalia's humanitarian disaster was not openly stated, it was often implied when media items concluded with grim descriptions of yet further chaos. Importantly, these descriptions were almost always through Western eyes, with little or no apparent input from Somali citizens themselves.

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<sup>32</sup> "UN Meets With Rival Factions in Somalia", *The New York Times*, August 7, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Ian Glover-James, "Airlift to Head Off Disaster in Somalia", *The Times*, August 16, 1992.

In seemingly contradictory fashion, many media items reported with tangible enthusiasm and confidence on American potential to 'save' Somalia; this tone was particularly obvious when the military technology and capabilities of arriving US soldiers were discussed. The images associated with the arrival of US and UN aid to Somalia were almost universally ones of military equipment. These seemingly opposing themes in coverage, pessimism about Somalia's hopelessness and optimistic zeal for high tech solutions, both had the effect, however, of minimising media focus on Somalia beyond the scope of possible American actions and of removing Somali people as important actors in events in their own country. Both discourses helped to create narratives that were far more informative about American international relations and policies than about Somalia's internal situation.

Articles throughout early August 1992 in *The Times* tell a story of continuing difficulties and failure in the distribution of food aid. The deployment of 500 armed peacekeepers was approved by both the UN and most Somali factional leaders at this time but further action was delayed. An August 17, 1992 article describing the blockading of supplies leaving Mogadishu port quotes an aid worker describing the situation as "just bedlam...a completely anarchic situation."<sup>34</sup> American plans to assist the air relief effort being organised by the UN were well-publicised in both newspapers and provided an occasional contrast to grim reports of death figures and failures to deliver relief.<sup>35</sup> The first line of a September 1, 1992 *New York Times* article announced: "The US cavalry has finally arrived in Somalia, bringing food and sympathy to a people beset by civil war and famine."<sup>36</sup> The article goes on to describe the desperation and helplessness of Somali famine victims and contrasts this to the hopeful possibilities that could be provided by US forces or, in a best case scenario, a permanent, multinational reaction force as recommended by Secretary General Boutros-Ghali.

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<sup>34</sup> "Somali Gunmen Loot UN Food and Fuel", *The Times*, August 17, 1992.

<sup>35</sup> See "Airlift to Head Off Disaster in Somalia", *The Times*, August 16, 1992 and "With UN's Help, US Will Airlift Food to Somalia", *The New York Times*, August 15, 1992.

<sup>36</sup> "A Foreign Legion For The World", *The New York Times*, September 1, 1992.

On August 20, 1992, a features article in *The Times* suggested that the only answer for Somalia was a form of UN protectorate status. Bringing in food was only the beginning; the UN would have to assume many of the former roles of the Somali government to get the country back on its feet. An incredibly bleak picture of the country was outlined in this article; "Somalia has ceased to exist as a functioning country...No independent nation in modern times has collapsed into such squalor, chaos and misery as Somalia."<sup>37</sup> Throughout August and September 1992, articles in both newspapers followed the incremental moves by the UN to secure permission for troops to protect relief supplies entering Mogadishu and being airlifted to other parts of the country. Articles were short and tended to focus on actions taken by Western powers, along with giving the opinions of Western aid workers on the ground in Somalia on the status of UN involvement. However, general expectations about what the mission could accomplish in Somalia remained low.

A *Times* of London Features piece in early October summed up a variety of civil crises in Africa with the conclusion that: "Most civil wars end not in truces but starvation and exhaustion...The cold logic forces a primitive and awful conclusion: fighting in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Somalia will not stop until death and destruction threaten entire populations."<sup>38</sup> Although this article acknowledges that for 'conscience sake' relief attempts must continue, it expresses little hope that these efforts will do anything to shorten or ease the conflict. A Jane Perlez article in late August, which attempts to provide some background to the clan rivalries dividing Somalia, also illustrates Perlez's lack of conviction that peace or stability will come easily to Somalia. Instead, Somalia is seen as an "extreme example of what could occur elsewhere on the continent." According to a quote in the article from the deputy chief of mission at the United States Embassy in Nairobi, "'We could end up with Africa the way it was before the colonialists came, divided up into tribal enclaves.'"<sup>39</sup> The assumption here, that 'Africa' was improved by the colonial practices and later state-creation missions of

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<sup>37</sup> "Rescue for Somalia", *The Times*, August 20, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> "How Civil Wars End", *The Times*, October 5, 1992.

<sup>39</sup> Jane Perlez, "Barrier to Somali Unity: Clan Rivalry", *The New York Times*, August 30, 1992.

Europeans, again suggests that Somalia has been largely responsible for its own suffering since independence. Agency to change situations in Africa is placed with Westerners, whereas 'Africa' is expected to simply revert to 'tribal' conditions if left to its own devices. The West is represented solely as a force for 'good' in this destructive place; its past activities are unquestioned and unexplored.

The predominately self-interested nature of Western fear of these 'tribal enclaves' is evident in a later article in *The Times*, which warns about the perils of large amounts of emigration from the developing world. The author, Bernard Levin, picks up a quote from a UN official in Somalia, marvelling at the fact that gangs who steal relief supplies and then sell them at market prices are ethnically, linguistically and ideologically the same as those from whom they steal. The official declares that the groups are "'only interested in power, and it cannot be shared'".<sup>40</sup> Levin asks, "what did the world do when Genghis Khan was on the move? The kind of border controls with which we are familiar will be meaningless; indeed, practically everything we regard as normal will be meaningless."<sup>41</sup> He grimly predicts the arrival of new groups of 'barbarian hordes' into Europe and the West, classifying ethnic groups as diverse as former members of the USSR together with northern Africans as poverty-stricken peoples who will soon demand a piece of the West's success. Kaplan's theme of 'coming anarchy' is particularly evident in this article, where any relationship between the privileged position of 'the West' and disastrous 'other' parts of the world remains unrecognised. 'Others' appear to matter only to the extent that they are threats to the First World's way of life. Greed and selfishness also re-emerge as key attributes applied only to 'others', whose immoral actions, such as stealing, are emphasized, rendering the delivery of such aid pointless, since it will end up in the hands of 'thieves' rather than innocents. The dominant discussion of looting aid as indicative of moral depravity in Somalia, instead, for example, of interpreting the stealing as a

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<sup>40</sup> Bernard Levin, "When Continents Collide", *The Times*, November 9, 1992.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

political survival strategy for specific groups or as part of a larger aid 'economy', will remain a common theme picked up in later coverage.

In the wake of the shelling of a relief ship in Mogadishu harbour in late November 1992 and continuing reports of the failure of aid to reach the needy, the US government indicated its willingness to consider sending upwards of thirty thousand American troops to Somalia. This announcement brought regular television coverage to the crisis. Interest had ebbed and flowed in both print and television journalism since the initial 'discovery' of the degree of the famine in August, with television having the more noticeable decline. The American presidential election had largely overshadowed the Somali crisis for much of the autumn of 1992. The announcement of American troop deployment was a major change in a situation whose parameters had already been well-explored by the media; it led to another burst of articles and opinion pieces in both papers and expert debates on television.

### **Framing Intervention: 'Saviours' Arrive or Doomed to Failure?**

As American intervention in Somalia became a certainty in late November 1992, alternating views of the mission continued to veer between faith in American military might and predictions of failure. Several articles in *The Times* were doubtful about the possibilities for positive action by the troops. Simon Jenkins wrote cynically about the implications of an intervention organised on the basis of media denunciations against suffering and again outlined two predicted outcomes of intervention in Somalia: "Washington will have either to rule Somalia indefinitely and against growing local resistance, or support one of the warlords, swamp him with weapons and get out. In the latter case, anarchy and famine will simply resume until, as in Mozambique and Liberia, exhaustion or a neighboring power takes over."<sup>42</sup> For Jenkins, the idea of "intimidat(ing) the warlords by 'blowing up one of their pickups with an M1 tank", setting up new Somali political and administrative structures in a little over a month,

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<sup>42</sup> Simon Jenkins, "This Caring Imperialism", *The Times*, December 5, 1992.

and leaving was blatantly naïve and impossible. He points out that “much the same was said in Vietnam”.<sup>43</sup>

Despite a next day appeal in the paper by former President Ronald Reagan for “a humanitarian velvet glove backed by a steel fist of military force”<sup>44</sup>, a December 9 article by Ben Macintyre followed Jenkins’s line of argument and questioned the supposed moral certainties of the Somalia intervention, coming as it was just before Christmas. Macintyre felt that the nightly news encouraged belief in the simplicity of the moral compulsion to act in Somalia through the use of “nightly television footage juxtaposing starving Somalis with grinning, gun-toting fighters riding around on Jeeps. The fact that in most instances these men are not Somali gangsters but protection units employed by the television crews is lost on most Americans because the anchormen usually do not care to point it out.”<sup>45</sup> Conor Cruise O’Brien, writing on December 15, also agreed with Macintyre’s sentiments:

Though designed to appeal to the genuinely humanitarian instincts of millions of Americans, the US intervention is a cynical pseudo-humanitarian publicity exercise. Its political objective could be readily divined from its timing. Troops were available for deployment in Mogadishu the weekend before last, but stayed aboard the ships. The reason was explained by a television producer in Mogadishu: ‘At the weekend, American television news bulletins are not long.’<sup>46</sup>

Norman Macrae stands out in *The Times*’s commentary as a supporter of the deployment, agreeing with the opinion of Ronald Reagan. Whether they believed intervention was the correct course of action or not, however, all the commentators doubted the likelihood of long-term US and UN commitment to rebuilding Somalia. As Macrae declared, “The best course for American soldiers would be to confiscate every Kalashnikov in the country, round up and deport all the warlord-politicians, and

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<sup>43</sup> Simon Jenkins, “This Caring Imperialism”, *The Times*, December 5, 1992.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Better Tomorrows as a Noble Vision Approaches Fruition”, *The Times*, December 6, 1992.

<sup>45</sup> Ben Macintyre, “Americans Embrace the Moral Certainties of Somali Crusade”, *The Times*, December 9, 1992.

<sup>46</sup> Conor Cruise O’Brien, “Blundering into Bosnia”, *The Times*, December 15, 1992.

temporarily impose a new colonial rule whether American, French or any other does not matter. This will not be allowed."<sup>47</sup>

This primarily-British cynicism over the prospect of long-term development success in Somalia was an importance difference between UK and US media coverage; American coverage, particularly television, was generally more positive about what their troops could achieve in Somalia, particularly after their dramatic arrival. British, and some American, doubts about the mission's longevity were, however, often supported by informational articles which reported American forces' desire to hand-off to UN troops as soon as possible. The Americans' desire for a quick handover was contrasted to the UN's, and particularly Boutros-Ghali's, belief in the need for long-term peace-building in Somalia. A *New York Times* editorial piece on December 1 warns that a timetable for withdrawal should be set up immediately; "The way to avoid a dreaded quagmire is to fix a deadline for renewal of troop authorizations that are written into any Security Council resolution."<sup>48</sup> Most print articles repeated the dominant American administration statement that the US was primarily interested in leading the early stages of an intervention but saw long-term peace-building as a UN job. At this point, when predictions of easy American troop success at quelling the activities of Somali gunmen were still prevalent in many media items, concerns over Somalia becoming another Vietnam-style quagmire were balanced by discussion of who would preside over Somalia's necessary long term reconstruction; "It may be possible to re-create Somalia, but it will take years. Are we prepared to stay that long, or would we, in the end, lose heart and pull out prematurely?"<sup>49</sup>

Many articles stuck with the sense of cynicism evident in *Times* items, suggesting that the American administration was more concerned with doing the Somalia mission quickly and with good publicity than with doing it 'right'. Jane Perlez highlighted how this type of strategy would cause serious problems in relations with the Somali population: "Many Somalis welcome the imminent American military

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<sup>47</sup> Norman Macrae, "Blast the Lily-Livered Peaceniks", *The Times*, December 13, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> "Do It Right in Somalia", *The New York Times*, December 1, 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Raymond Bonner, "Buy Up the Somalis' Guns", *The New York Times*, December 2, 1992.



intervention in their country, but they view the narrowly focused goal of protecting the delivery of food to the destitute as a mere sideshow to what really interests them: an end to the clan violence, economic reconstruction and political reconciliation. And they expect America to deliver on all counts."<sup>50</sup>

The American Ambassador to Kenya, Smith Hempstone, was among the clearest of fatalistic voices in a media spectrum of opinion where British commentators appeared generally more pessimistic than American. Hempstone felt that military intervention in Somalia posed more risks than the American administration was aware of and that, while humanitarian, did not serve the country's vital national interests. "Somalis, as the Italians and the British discovered to their discomfiture, are natural-born guerrillas," Mr. Hempstone said... "They will mine the roads. They will lay ambushes. They will launch hit and run attacks. They will not be able to stop the convoys from getting through. But they will inflict- and take- casualties."<sup>51</sup> Despite their questionable basis in regarding identity formation as 'primordial', Hempstone's predictions, along with those of Jenkins and Macintyre, turned out to be fairly accurate. At the time Hempstone's statements were published, they added to the doubts already circulating about the Somalia mission in both newspapers, even before the landing of American troops on Somali beaches.

To a large extent, increased television coverage around the time of the American decision to intervene echoed many of the doubts and concerns of various print media pieces while continuing to rely on 'powerful' images of starvation and human suffering, which had driven coverage from the early stages of the crisis. A November 30 ABC *Nightline* debate opened with a montage of 'classic' famine shots, which had been making brief appearances in nightly news broadcasts. Scenes of small, crying children with bloated bellies were flashed up for only seconds, followed by images of young Somali men with guns and then Somalis moving roughly-wrapped body bags. The montage concluded with scenes of what appear to be Western troops in uniform

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<sup>50</sup> Jane Perlez, "Mission to Somalia: Expectations in Somalia", *The New York Times*, December 4, 1992.

<sup>51</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Mission to Somalia; Envoy Asserts Intervention In Somalia Is Risky And Not In Interests Of US", *The New York Times*, December 6, 1992.

marching in a desert area. Speaking over top of this montage, anchor Forrest Sawyer declared, "First you need to understand just how bad things really are in Somalia. It is a place that no longer exists as a nation. There are only swirling gangs who loot and fight while millions around them starve to death."<sup>52</sup> Somalia was thus again reduced to a space of anarchy and destruction, populated in this description by clearly-definable victims and aggressors. Sawyer goes on to open the report and debate by asking many of the important questions that were being debated in print media: what would happen if our "boys come home in body bags?", "what is the US getting into and will it be able to get out?" and "if US troops leave quickly will Somalia collapse again?". These questions were routinely asked throughout the entire intervention period, with few to no new insights being given.

Images throughout the report section echo those shown earlier in the news item but also resemble the still images shown in print coverage, flashing between shots of gun-wielding men on trucks and crying women and children. Close-up images of dead Somali bodies are shown, faces visible (see Image 3), along with shots of children fighting and pushing for bits of dropped dry grain. The American network's willingness to use this clear shot of a dead body is important to note, particularly in light of general UK and US media reluctance to show images of other categories of bodies, particularly American ones. According to the later standards of acceptability for showing bodies given by American media after incidents in Fallujah, it is the anonymity of this particular black Somali woman which makes her a usable image for American television. She represents one of many 'African' victims, whereas American victims tend to be viewed as recognisable 'individuals'.

The responsibility for this situation is clearly placed on the UN. UN forces in Somalia are called "token" and are said to have "failed miserably". An interviewed World Vision worker says Somalia is "like a Mad Max movie", referring to situations where gunmen have hijacked much of the food aid destined for the starving. These comments are reminiscent of many made by aid workers interviewed for print articles.

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<sup>52</sup> ABC *Nightline*, November 30, 1992.

Despite significant improvements in famine areas by December 1992, Somalia continued to be represented almost exclusively as a disaster area, through imagery of seemingly malnourished women and children contrasted with gun-wielding men. UN efforts are denigrated, reinforcing the idea that only US military could 'save' Somalia. As will be seen below when compared with BBC coverage, this view was primarily aired by American media. It echoed comments made by President Bush in his televised address to the nation, which stressed America's unique capabilities to feed and enforce peace in Somalia. These comments were likely intended to bolster public support for the agreed-to actions, which, in a cyclical fashion, were being justified as at least partly due to public demand after seeing famine imagery in the media. Bureaucratic analysis of the American decision to intervene, significantly that undertaken by Livingston and Eachus, suggests that these webs of perception and influence between media, government bodies and individuals, and audiences were likely as important a factor in the decision to intervene as direct evidence and information from Somalia.<sup>53</sup>

Immediate pre-intervention coverage by the BBC, while not expressing any dramatically different information from ABC, did take a slightly different visual approach and reporting style to the Somali situation. A December 4, 1992 lead story on the deployment of US troops to Somalia began with graphics showing a map of Somalia along with counts of troop numbers from countries other than the US involved in the Somalia intervention. Viewers were thus given a sense of the multilateral element to the mission, which was not commonly mentioned or imaged in ABC coverage. In the December 4 BBC item, clips from Bush's televised speech to the American public are interspersed with images of American policymakers speaking to reporters. Voiceover commentary and the comment of an American senator explain that some are concerned that Somalia will become a quagmire similar to Vietnam, illustrating the sense of doubt about the mission which regularly pervaded almost all media coverage.

Some use of traditional 'famine' images, comparable to those of ABC, occurred in a second BBC item on December 4, which is introduced by anchor Martin Lewis

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<sup>53</sup> See Livingston & Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy".

using a small image of an emaciated toddler with a UN symbol behind it. This item begins with shots of a crying, skinny child held by its mother with rows of other thin women and children sitting behind, indicating the scale of problems in Somalia. The current estimated death toll of a quarter of a million people is announced over this image, which changes to take in a shot of a single young boy staring at the camera, flies crawling on his face. This conjunction of imagery and statistics works to both create a sense of immense scale while also linking the famine problem to single 'innocent' individuals, such as the boy.

Imagery is used in combination with statistics again as Somali men are shown standing on large piles of food, which viewers are told is in a warehouse in Mogadishu. Commentary explains that there is enough food in the warehouse to feed one million people for a month but it cannot be moved because of gunmen on the streets. The reporter declares that, "where children carry machine guns there are too many rival gangs"<sup>54</sup> as images appear of three young men and a boy with a large gun and young boys fixing guns. Although the transitions are less abrupt, the BBC item's narrative works like the ABC report to create distinguishable categories of 'innocent' and 'evil' Somalis. The visual representation of boy children on both sides of this spectrum serves to complicate the situation slightly, but is not commented upon, except to the extent that young children's armed participation in gang activities indicates the dramatic amount of disorder in Somali society. In both cases, however, imagery assists in showing Somalia's destitution and distance, geographically and socially, from the lives of those coming to 'save' it. This divide is also emphasized in commentary which declares that: "The most sophisticated force in the world is headed for pre-industrial squalor with no power or running water."<sup>55</sup> Shots which accompany this dialogue show women and children trying to gather water from a muddy, shallow well.

The contrasts between the 'horrors' of life in physically and socially demolished Somalia and the role of American and Western forces as high-tech 'saviours' of this

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<sup>54</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, December 4, 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

state were a constant feature during the final days of build-up before the troop arrival. ABC opened a December 7, 1992 report with images of American jets streaking over Mogadishu; it then cut to Somali men lying injured on makeshift hospital beds and chewing *khat*. Commentary over this report declared that the “violent nightmare” in Somalia had to be stopped. Images of armed Somalis carrying food aid ashore by hand and guarding it in jeeps were overlaid with commentary explaining that Marines would soon be responsible for these roles. The visible contrast between the military ‘might’ of the US compared to the antiquated or ‘low-tech’ options of Somali guards and gunmen are thus made visually even when they are not stated explicitly. BBC reports on December 7 and 8, 1992 also focused on displaying American military equipment arriving in Somali air and sea space, as well as areas that would soon be under US control. The fact that Somalis with guns in these areas would be considered a threat after these takeovers was mentioned.

Print media also encouraged this ‘saviour-victim’ dichotomy and revelled in military technologies. A December 9, 1992 article in *The Times* included a large graphic of the various American planes, ships and helicopters that would be used in Somalia, with captions explaining their capabilities, carrying capacities and duties for the mission. Much was made rhetorically of the new conjunction of military might and humanitarian ‘goodness’. Headlines for this *Times* article read: “Marines bring mercy at the end of a gun”, “US troops sweep in before dawn to rescue starving Somalis” and “Two thousand US marines in Somalia are welcomed as saviours. Support at home could be eroded if the troops become bogged down.”<sup>56</sup> (See Image 5)

Coverage of the actual arrival of US troops by both TV stations continued the heavy focus on images and descriptions of American troops and military hardware, with occasional attempts to explore current conditions for Somalis in Mogadishu and beyond. These attempts were often hampered by technological problems for media networks, however, and the importance of representing this faraway tragedy through Western eyes and points of view is made evident in many ways. The introduction and

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Fletcher and Sam Kiley, “Marines Bring Mercy at the End of a Gun”, *The Times*, December 9, 1992.

cuts to commercial breaks during the ABC *Nightline in Somalia* special broadcast showed a map of the Horn region with various images of US troops and equipment superimposed across it, next to Somalia. (See Image 4) Viewing publics were presumed to need constant reminding of Somalia's location; their views of the country were restricted almost completely to such computer-generated maps, along with up-close shots of US troops and equipment and the two Somali categories, starving women and children and armed men.

Somali citizens literally became witnesses to this huge 'show' of force in some similar ways to Western TV viewers. This curious "sightseeing" was repeatedly commented on by ABC anchor Ted Koppel, who also stood above the beaches of Mogadishu to be filmed surveying the desert landscape and arriving forces. Koppel called it "a public relations exercise" by the US military, who might otherwise have chosen to seal off the area of open tarmac close to their arrival point for safety reasons but instead allowed hundreds of Somalis to stream across the area in order to watch the troops. Because of technical issues, but also seemingly as a matter of style and approach, ABC coverage on December 8 largely focused on the image of Koppel, backed by arriving military equipment and personnel, with only occasional cuts to other reporters throughout Mogadishu. The way in which media-military relations became a source of discussion on many special television reports of the landing was noted in a *New York Times* article, which quoted comments from all three major American news anchors (ABC, NBC and CBS).<sup>57</sup> The article commented specifically on the attempts of the Pentagon to improve and re-shape media-military relations in the post-Cold War world. "'It's clear that since Vietnam, they have learned the lesson of television- how to use television in a way that's helpful to them,' he [John Katz, media critic for *Rolling Stone*] said."<sup>58</sup>

ABC images of hovercraft and armoured vehicles coming ashore on what audiences are told were Mogadishu beaches are interspersed with shots of Marines

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<sup>57</sup> James Barron, "Mission To Somalia; Live, And In Great Numbers: It's Somalia Tonight With Tom, Ted And Dan", *The New York Times*, December 9, 1992.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

creeping into the city as if entering a hostile environment, their guns drawn as they move past curious-looking Somali citizens. (See Image 6i) The day in Mogadishu was described by Koppel as “normal”, with an image shown of a busy market. This image was a fleeting but important contrast to common images and written descriptions of Somalia as completely “anarchic”, filled only with victims and ‘thugs’. Marines interviewed for the program confirm that they are not worried about Somali citizens, just armed gangs “strung out on drugs”. These gangs appear to be nowhere in sight and the ease and safety of the American arrival was brought up in interviews with officials by Koppel. The unnecessary show of force visually illustrated ways in which arriving foreign forces were out of touch with conditions and public opinion in Somalia. Given that the Marines had only very basic knowledge about Somalia and its people, could communicate with almost no Somalis, and were told to treat all Somalis as potential threats, the issue of differentiating ‘normal’ Somalis from ‘gangs’ would soon become problematic.

BBC’s December 9 report also begins visually with mapping; Mogadishu is shown on a map of Somalia, along with other Somali towns that will be used as bases from which to deliver food. Again, images are primarily of soldiers disembarking from military hardware and helicopters flying over desert terrain. The confused reaction of American troops, told they were coming ashore to a dangerous situation only to face nothing more hostile than large groups of Western journalists, is made particularly explicit in the BBC footage, with troops in desert fatigues and black face paint shown smiling sheepishly at cameras, illustrating the ‘staged’ nature of their arrival to ‘save’ Somalia. (See Image 6ii) Some tried to ignore the cameras and reporters while others actively took direction to pose for shots, both of which created a more cinematic effect. A few photojournalists, including Paul Lowe, shot images which deliberately illustrated the media-orchestrated nature of the situation, where heavily-armed troops moved defensively through terrain that appeared to show no threat whatsoever trailed by hordes of journalists eager to capture ‘the arrival’. (See Image 7) While both networks comment on the publicity-oriented style of the American landing, BBC

coverage is more clear about both illustrating this aspect of the situation visually, by showing the interactions between media and troops on the beaches, and by later suggesting in the item's narrative that the whole landing appeared to have been timed to coincide with American primetime broadcasts.

Coverage examples in this lengthy section illustrate that although speculation about the possible outcomes of the intervention was often cynical, particularly in British media coverage, once the decision to send American troops to Somalia became a certainty the American media, particularly television, 'rallied round' them. The troops' military technological capabilities became an area of media interest once the intervention began. Several items expressed confidence that such technology would allow troops to solve the problems of Somalia's famine and conflict quickly and easily. Somalia itself continued to be represented primarily as a place of anarchy and famine; while media coverage of its situation increased, the style of its coverage did not change dramatically. Gradual improvements in the country's situation, which had largely been achieved by the localised efforts of NGOs and more successful UN negotiators such as Sahnoun throughout the autumn of 1992, were not widely represented in media coverage. Somalia was thus portrayed as needing to be 'saved', implying that it had few to no resources to do this itself and would require an effort led almost completely by new characters in its story: American, and to a lesser extent UN, troops and policymakers.

### **Somalia in Context: Exceptions in Coverage**

Media coverage which explored issues other than the Marine arrival and actions was rare in December 1992 and exceptions to this trend are therefore important to note. In January 1993, Jane Perlez wrote an article which ventured outside common parameters of informational material about the Americans in technological and humanitarian terms and Somalia's general 'chaos'; she attempted to put the arrival of UNITAF troops in a larger context. In the article, she questions the prevailing assumption in much media coverage that the Americans could only possibly bring



good to Somalia and instead explores the complex economic relationships at play in the country. Perlez speaks explicitly about the arrival of the major American networks in Somalia just before the troop landings and the influx of money and expensive equipment that they brought along with their top anchors. These networks rented places to stay in Mogadishu for inflated prices from local Somalis; highly secure compounds were the most desirable.

As it turns out, Perlez explains, when anchor Dan Rather did many of his face-to-camera shots, “a specially rented, theatrically painted ‘technical’ would be wheeled through the front gate, its anti-artillery gun cocked at a provocative angle providing trouble-free but menacing atmospherics for the viewers back home.”<sup>59</sup> Perlez points to the fact that the famine had already been easing substantially before American Marines landed in Mogadishu. This was largely due to efforts of aid agencies and the American airlift from Kenya, which led to the price of rice plummeting in and around Mogadishu. When looting food became less profitable, Perlez explains, opportunistic Somalis found other methods for profiting, including manipulating the Somali shilling currency and stealing from wealthy Western journalists. This new perspective on the situation in Somalia, one where the effects of Western intervention were considered and criticised, exposes the critical shortcomings of much of Somalia intervention coverage to this point, challenging many of the simple dichotomies that had been created and supported. The example below from television coverage of the troops’ arrival is a less common attempt in this media genre to provide context for Somalia’s current situation.

ABC included one of its most detailed reports on the background to the Somali conflict during its special primetime coverage of the intervention landings. Created to answer the question ‘why are the Marines in Somalia?’, the item began with scenes of Somalis herding skinny camels on a dry, dusty landscape. A human skull and bones lie on the ground nearby, visually representing the hardship and proximity to death for those living in Somalia. In an interview with the item’s lead reporter, John Hockenberry, Ken Hackett of Catholic Relief Services declares that “the entire world

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<sup>59</sup> Jane Perlez, “Gunmen, \$150 a Day”, *The New York Times*, January 24, 1993.

community was late" in aiding Somalia. As images of skinny, singing children flash by, Hackett says "the world just wanted to put Somalia aside, not look at it".<sup>60</sup> Again, close-ups of children's faces are shown: some covered in flies, some emaciated, some crying. Commentary by Hockenberry claims that this is a society where "the only functioning devices are weapons". Initially, the report thus appears to draw on many of the 'classic' visual tropes representing 'poverty', 'famine' and 'Africa' to introduce Somalia as a place.

The tone of the report changes during an interview with Rakiya Omaar, a Somali who was a former director of the NGO Africa Watch; she begins to put the current situation in Somalia into historical context. Omaar tells Hockenberry that the only aspects of the conflict in Somalia which could not have been predicted were the scale and extent of violence and cruelty, but that the last twenty years of history have set the stage for this catastrophe. Hockenberry states, "it's as though a nation took poison"; Omaar retorts, "a government poisoned its own people". American Rep. Howard Wolpe, a former chair of the Africa subcommittee, admits in an interview that he blames the US government for continuing to arm and aid the autocratic President Siad Barre despite evidence of his corruption and violent repression of dissent in Somalia. Alexander Haig, a former Secretary of State, acknowledges that the "sideshow" African conflicts of the Cold War became "tit for tat" operations, where funding and arming continued in response to the dynamics of the Soviet-American rivalry, rather than with any reference to local conditions.

Archived footage of the beginning of the Somali uprising and overthrow of Siad Barre is shown, filmed mostly from American embassy windows. Hockenberry explains that reports from Somalia did not make news headlines in late 1990 and early 1991 due to the escalation of the Gulf War; consequently, very few Westerners were aware of the deteriorating situation in Somalia. James Bishop, the last US Ambassador to Somalia, is interviewed saying that his staff paid a Somali officer to lead Soviet diplomats to the American embassy so that they could be evacuated with other

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<sup>60</sup> ABC *Nightline*, December 8, 1992.

diplomatic personnel. Hockenberry comments on the irony of the fact that representatives of the two rival countries who had done so much to arm and damage Somalia should end up leaving the country together. Bishop responds that he and the Soviet ambassador were friends and regularly played tennis together, expanding on the absurdity of the situation. Wolpe responds to Hockenberry's final question of "did we walk away from Somalia?" with a "yes...as if we had no connection to these past events".<sup>61</sup> Reports such as this one are extremely rare throughout coverage of the Somalia intervention, and thus a detailed summary of this report is justified. The length and scope of the report were unprecedented in viewed television coverage of the Somali conflict to this point and were matched only by a few lengthy print articles. Several interviews with Somalis led Hockenberry through sites of importance in the country, explaining atrocities committed by Siad Barre and the country's rapid arming under alternating Cold War patronage. These moments of Somali involvement in their country's representation, along with previously unseen imagery of Somalia, are not often repeated in later coverage.

After this particular piece, television coverage largely remained fixated on US troops, who became new protagonists in the drama of Somalia. Discussion began about when US troops would reach the interior villages of Somalia with aid; on December 11 both BBC and ABC reported on conditions in Baidoa, a former farming village that had had high death rates during the worst of the famine. BBC briefly showed white-sheeted bodies being loaded into a truck and a single body being buried. Reporter George Alagiah commented over these images that ninety people a day were still dying in Baidoa.<sup>62</sup> For a short while, Baidoa was able to provide the 'famine' images for which many media were still looking. Western audiences had been prepared to expect conditions to 'justify' their troops' involvement in Somalia; the gradual cessation of the famine during the autumn of 1992 had not been largely covered, especially by television media, and thus a healthier, less 'chaotic' Somali population would have

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<sup>61</sup> ABC *Nightline*, December 8, 1992.

<sup>62</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, December 11, 1992.

appeared out of place to many Western viewers, previously warned of mass civilian deaths. As American troops rapidly spread across the 'famine triangle' of Somalia, images and stories of troops delivering food to 'needy' Somalis were shown only briefly; discussion began, particularly in print media, about where the intervention would go from this point. A resurgence of fatalistic commentaries began after an initial period of troop arrival coverage; the new and recurrent parts of this theme will be explored below.

### **Fatalism Resurgent: The Land of No Hope**

By January 3, 1993, *The Times* was already reporting that gang and gun violence was rising again in Mogadishu; a report by Richard Ellis highlights the cynicism with which the return to violence was viewed by many Western journalists: "Mogadishu returned to normal last week. Large-scale clan fighting lit up the new year's eve sky, and on the streets of Somalia's war-devastated capital it was business as usual for Abri the killer... Three weeks after the marines stormed ashore to save this war-torn country from suicide, Somalia is in danger of degenerating back into anarchy."<sup>63</sup> The Ellis article is accompanied by an image of three scowling Somali men on a 'technical' vehicle with guns, a young boy looking on. Quotes from Somali men included in the article involve the men bragging about how much money they have been able to extort from media agencies and relief organisations. Rakiya Omaar and various aid workers who were interviewed express doubt and concern about US and UN commitment to long-term disarmament and peace-building in Somalia. Once again, a sense of fatalism appears to condemn Somalia to a violent existence that is deemed to be its norm. Sam Kiley, writing the next day in *The Times*, attributed this reluctance to get involved in Somalia to "Vietnam syndrome", a phrase that had been used since before American troops arrived in Somalia. Kiley maintained that "more energy had been spent by generals and State Department officials in planning the withdrawal of American troops from the shattered country than was spent on working out what exactly to do when

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Ellis, "Gun Gangs Rule Again On Streets of Somalia", *The Sunday Times*, January 3, 1993.

they got there.”<sup>64</sup> Bush’s outgoing Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney appeared to confirm this statement when he said that although Somalia remained “a nasty, dangerous neighbourhood” the US would begin slowly downscaling its numbers of troops in the country after incoming President Clinton’s inauguration.<sup>65</sup>

February’s print coverage further encouraged dire predictions about Somalia’s potential for improvement and about conditions in Africa in general. A features piece on January 31, 1993 which urges the British government to consider rebuilding rather than decreasing its armed forces, stated that “the Third World is full of festering Somalias.”<sup>66</sup> Three days later, a February 2 features piece began with the sub-heading that “Africa’s would-be democrats deserve more Western attention” and concluded that innovative, long-suffering elements of various African states’ civil societies deserve more Western help. The overwhelming bulk of the article, however, was devoted to describing the Mobutu dictatorship in Zaire and environmental disasters and hardships in other African states.<sup>67</sup> While such articles made the case for a changed approach to understanding and engaging with parts of Africa, their primary substance remained descriptive narratives about the long-term suffering, violence and corruption in many African states. The beginning of clashes in Mogadishu between Somali gunmen and UN and US troops appeared to be justification for the standard, pessimistic view of Somalia and with it Africa at large: “An unprecedented military expedition on purely humanitarian grounds, Operation Restore Hope is perhaps the most stark example of the powerlessness of the international community to bring order to the growing chaos across the African continent which has followed the end of the Cold war.”<sup>68</sup>

*The New York Times’* coverage of the UNITAF mission past its initial arrival stages echoed more pessimistic *Times* coverage, although there are more descriptive quotes from American troops in the country, likely due to perceived public interest in the activities and opinions of their national soldiers. A February 14, 1993 *New York*

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<sup>64</sup> Sam Kiley, “‘Vietnam Syndrome’ Blurs US Vision in Somalia”, *The Times*, January 4, 1993.

<sup>65</sup> David Watts, “Somalia Remains ‘Too Nasty’ For Quick US Pullout”, *The Times*, January 3, 1993.

<sup>66</sup> “Rebuild the Forces”, *The Sunday Times*, January 31, 1993.

<sup>67</sup> “One Man in a Boat”, *The Times*, February 2, 1993.

<sup>68</sup> Sam Kiley, “Mogadishu Clashes Threaten to Delay Pullout By Marines”, *The Times*, February 27, 1993.

*Times* story quotes a US Marine Corporal facing "ghosts of his own. 'When I look at this place, I see Lebanon," he said. 'It looks just like Beirut.'"<sup>69</sup> The story describes the fears of many experienced soldiers that they are becoming involved in a conflict they know very little about, a situation which in Lebanon resulted in the deaths of 241 Marines caught up in a long-term factional struggle. A February 16 article, which follows a group of Marines on house-to-house weapons searches in Mogadishu also quotes a Marine discussing the similarities of the Somali situation to Beirut and indicates the general high level of frustration felt by the Marines in their interactions with Somali citizens, who they view as primordially violent and unmanageable; "'This was going on 800 years before we got here, and it'll be going on 800 years after we're gone,' Captain Rababy said. 'I'm getting tired of being played for the sucker.' ... 'This is a sewer that's going to suck us in,' Captain Rababy said. 'It's going to be worse than Beirut. Beirut had two sides. Here, we got 14.'"<sup>70</sup>

Growing Western frustration with the failure of Somalia to improve quickly also found voice in articles which cynically described the need for 'realistic' aspirations for Somalia, where no "oasis of democracy"<sup>71</sup> was expected to emerge anytime soon. The implication appears to be that Somalia was not ready for democracy, although comments are focused on the idea that Western political systems should not be forced on a non-Western country. Comments by Somalis in a February 21, 1993 *New York Times* article are used to suggest that democracy has little meaning in Somalia and that the language of democracy is simply used by rival factions who wish to take power to benefit only themselves.

Cynicism about the possibility of improvement in Somalia, tied not to the problematic history of Cold War Western involvement in the country but primarily to the 'nature' and structures of the society and people themselves, had been a pervasive aspect of media coverage despite occasional optimistic media items around the time of

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<sup>69</sup> Diana Jean Schemo, "On Mogadishu's 'Green Line', Nothing Is Sacred", *The New York Times*, February 14, 1993.

<sup>70</sup> "Troops in Somalia Face 'Hatfields and McCoys'", *The New York Times*, February 16, 1993.

<sup>71</sup> Diana Jean Schemo, "Nearly Everything in Somalia Is Now Up for Grabs", *The New York Times*, February 21, 1993.

the troop intervention. The killing of Pakistani peacekeepers in June 1993, a little over a month after the UNOSOM II mission took over from UNITAF, was to act as confirmation for the many who had predicted the eventual failure and ruin of the Somalia intervention from before its inception. From the remains of speculation and commentary pieces, a new series of 'action' images and narratives emerged, beginning a story of decline which lasted until the dramatic final images of the intervention.

### **Somalia Doomed: Violence in Mogadishu & Echoes of Vietnam**

As UN retaliatory strikes continued after the Pakistani deaths and the hunt for Aidid was intensified, newspapers increased their positioning of the situation in Somalia within familiar discourses of fatalism and institutional overstretch. A *New York Times* article was quick to point out that, since they had highly varied levels of training and equipment, the UNOSOM II forces were much less effective than the twenty-six thousand US Marines and troops who had served from December 1992 to early May 1993.<sup>72</sup> Another *New York Times* article on June 18, 1993 highlighted that despite President Clinton's pronouncement that the operation against Aidid was "over", the situation in Somalia remained highly unsettled, with Aidid still at large and Pentagon plans for an open-ended military operation in place.<sup>73</sup>

Warnings from within the US administration about the dangers of focusing policy on one individual were mentioned, using quotes from General Colin Powell. Although *New York Times* articles tended to remain focused on recounting the factual details of almost daily UN attacks on Aidid 'strongholds' in Mogadishu, one editorial piece pointed out the dangers of such actions; "Although the punitive actions seem justifiable, the operation now stands at a dangerous point. The US and UN could slide unthinkingly into deep involvement in Somalia's internal chaos."<sup>74</sup> *The Times* of London's coverage of Somalia at this point tended to be more editorial, with a range of

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Gordon, "US Intensifies Attack to Oust a Somali Clan", *The New York Times*, June 17, 1993.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Gordon, "Clinton, Praising 'Success', Says Goal Was Not to Capture Aidid", *The New York Times*, June 18, 1993.

<sup>74</sup> "Drawing the Line in Somalia", *The New York Times*, June 20, 1993.

opinions being expressed on the ongoing violence. A June 14 piece supported the UN's tough line against Aidid, suggesting that only a full-scale disarmament of faction leaders would reduce anarchy and violence in Somalia for the good of its citizens.<sup>75</sup> The possible side-effects of a disarmament 'policy' which mainly involved airborne attacks on heavily-populated urban areas were not commented upon.

Media focus on the potential of new military technologies to exact revenge on Aidid also had the effect of shifting attention away from those who would live (or die) with the damage inflicted by these attacks. Articles in the days following the attack featured lengthy descriptions of AC-130H 'Specter' gunships, which were set to arrive in Somalia immediately to assist with retaliatory attacks on Aidid's resources.<sup>76</sup> *The Sunday Times* ran a major article on these planes, as well as the first series of bombing raids against Aidid's weapons sites and radio station, on June 13. The article headline is in bold: "Enter The Terminator: US takes its revenge for massacre of the peacemakers", endorsing the predominant vocabulary of Aidid versus the UN, using primarily US troops, in a military showdown. The initial UN Security Council resolution to arrest and prosecute the killers of the Pakistanis drops to a mere mention in a *New York Times* report<sup>77</sup> and is not mentioned at all in *The Times* "Terminator" article. (See Image 8)

The "Terminator" article is dominated by large graphics of military weaponry, describing the technological capabilities of the Specter gunship and giving a close-up, labelled look at its interior. The choice to target Radio Mogadishu was justified with the explanation that it was transmitting "anti-UN propaganda". A June 12, 1993 *New York Times* article also calls the radio station part of Aidid's "power base", thereby reinforcing the idea that there is legitimate cause to bomb it. Initial media acceptance of the bombings as legitimate can be linked to the representation of Mogadishu primarily as a space of 'targets' as opposed to a living space. While vivid descriptions of US

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<sup>75</sup> "Death in Mogadishu", *The Times*, June 14, 1993.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas Jehl, "US Is Sending Planes to Bolster UN in Somalia", *The New York Times*, June 10, 1993.

<sup>77</sup> Michael R Gordon, "US Attacks Somali Clan Chief to Support UN Peacekeepers", *The New York Times*, June 12, 1993.



bombings' effects on Mogadishu are not uncommon, they only rarely link the destruction of the bombings with the city as a lived-in space. The following quote is an example of such irregular coverage, describing how attacking helicopters "skimm(ed) less than 50ft above the heads of watching Somalis" and "thick black smoke belched into the night sky as red and orange flames leapt from burning buildings in what is one of the city's most densely populated areas."<sup>78</sup>

As had occurred in earlier coverage, articles outlining military capabilities of US forces regularly alternated with media coverage that expressed strong doubts about the possibilities for mission success. Simon Jenkins reinforced this opinion with an article on June 16, 1993 in which he discussed the naivety of the American decision to become involved in Somalia:

There was no way the Somalian venture could have brought more than a temporary ceasefire. Even 28,000 soldiers cannot disarm a nation, let alone bring peace and democracy in six months. The strategy of restoring law and order and handing stable administration over to the UN was ludicrous, and the Americans knew it...The [aid] agencies remain the real heroes of Mogadishu. They must now hope the UN gets out. They must reassert their independence, buy their own protection and let Somalians resume their bloody search for a new regime.<sup>79</sup>

Jenkins goes farther to declare that Somalia and several other African countries such as Liberia, Sudan and Mozambique, while "unappealing political entities to the Western mind" provide no risk to Western interest or world security; "They are proper objects of charity, but not for soldiers or so-called 'peacekeepers'". He concludes that if America wishes to undertake "moral imperialism" it should do so with a long term strategy, reminiscent of British approaches to colonialism, and resist the urge to quick fixes in order to end painful television images of suffering. While Jenkins makes important points about failures and difficulties with the US/UN strategy in Somalia, his article falls back on the well-illustrated theme of deep cynicism with regards to

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<sup>78</sup> Mark Huband, "Enter the Terminator", *The Sunday Times*, June 13, 1993.

<sup>79</sup> Simon Jenkins, "The Black Man's Burden", *The Times*, June 16, 1993.

development and change in Africa. The entire continent becomes understood as a place best left to its own “bloody” devices and the moral imperative to intervene, an underlying theme in earlier coverage of the famine, is reversed in meaning to become an immoral approach. Positive engagement strategies for the West are limited to charity.

Media coverage of Somalia began to pick up on fractures within the UN and aid community coalition more frequently throughout the summer of 1993. Aid workers were quoted expressing frustration with the insecurity in Mogadishu which prevented them from doing their jobs and prominent American policymakers were quoted expressing their discomfort with the new, aggressive nature of the UNOSOM II mission. The media had been largely uncritical of UN strategies until discord became obvious among the policy elites. Dissenting views, however, were only heard through Western voices, rather than from many Somali leaders and citizens who had been urging alternative strategies from the beginning of the UN attacks.

By mid-July and August 1993, coverage levels of Somalia had dropped off considerably; editorialized statements about the situation in the country were made in both newspapers, expressing cynicism that was now linked to American and UN handling of the intervention as well as portrayals of Somalia as doomed its violent situation. A July 18, 1993 *New York Times* article argued that “Somalia is turning out to be the UN’s Vietnam- easy to get into, hard to get out of, very costly and, perhaps, unwinnable?”<sup>80</sup> On August 1, Thomas Friedman, writing in *The New York Times*, followed the thoughts of Simon Jenkins by describing Somalia as part of a “diplomacy of lost causes”; he suggested these were situations which touched the American public through media coverage but were not “vital interests” for the US.<sup>81</sup> *Times* articles focused on the confusion and contradiction evident in American and UN policy towards Somalia. An August 11 piece claimed that *The New York Times* had reported that the Clinton administration continued to support the presence of American troops

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Bernstein, “The World: Against New Odds, The UN Insists on Helping in Somalia”, *The New York Times*, July 18, 1993.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Friedman, “The World: A New Diplomacy of Lost Causes”, *The New York Times*, August 1, 1993.

in Somalia as long as Aidid remained a fugitive while *The Washington Post* announced at the same time that the administration was “stepping up plans for the withdrawal of American forces”.<sup>82</sup> Along with this confusion over the direction of policy, Americans and other UN troops were described in the article as having drifted from their humanitarian goal and become involved as a party in the Somali civil war, leading to their alienation from the population.

Sporadic media coverage of events in Mogadishu in late August and early September 1993 continued to highlight actions taken by American-led UN forces against Aidid. On September 10, both newspapers reported on an incident in which approximately 100 Somalis died in a street battle with UN forces. In each article, comment is made on the growing eagerness in the American Congress and Senate to extricate US forces from the Somalia conflict. For *The Times*, this merely reinforced prevalent belief that the UN had lost sight of its humanitarian role in the country while *The New York Times*’ more extensive piece pointed to the political chaos that could be unleashed if America pulled out of Somalia too abruptly. The incident was labelled as “reminiscent of Vietnam” in a September 11, 1993 *Times* article; allusions were made that the open-ended and unclear mission in Somalia was “casting its shadow” over proposals to send US peacekeepers to Bosnia.<sup>83</sup> A September 16 *New York Times* editorial again argued in favour of setting up a neo-colonial protectorate to stop violence in Somalia until ‘good’ leaders could emerge.<sup>84</sup> By September 23, however, a report in *The New York Times* announced that the Clinton administration was planning to define new limits for any future US role in UN peacekeeping, suggesting that extended involvement was not a serious American consideration. In summary, media coverage in late summer 1993 had begun to represent the increasingly fractured viewpoints of governments, NGOs and international organisations on the Somali situation. Options for dealing with the renewed violence and civilian suffering in the country, however, went largely unconsidered. In the prevailing mood of cynicism

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<sup>82</sup> Ian Brodie, “Elusive Aidid Throws American Strategy Into Disarray”, *The Times*, August 11, 1993.

<sup>83</sup> Ian Brodie, “Congress Demands Clear Somalia Goals”, *The Times*, September 11, 1993.

<sup>84</sup> Caleb Carr, “The Humanitarian Illusion”, *The New York Times*, September 16, 1993.

about the entire mission, Somalia and its people were again left to fend for themselves, both literally and in coverage of their situation. A little more than a week later, the major 'closing' incident in the Somalia intervention story would occur, carrying on themes of 'Vietnam-like' overstretch while acting as the catalyst for new ways of thinking about American military strategy and UN intervention.

### **'Black Hawk Down': The Unexpected Expected**

An editorial piece by George Kennan shortly before the 'Black Hawk down' events, along with the events themselves, had the effect of returning a sizable segment of Somalia media coverage to the nature of 'Somalia' itself, and its suitability and worthiness of aid. The published excerpt from Kennan's diary, allegedly written in December 1992 when American troops first entered Somalia, acted as a fatalistic premonition of the intervention's outcome in Somalia. For Kennan:

the situation we are trying to correct has its roots in the fact that the people of Somalia are wholly unable to govern themselves and that the entire territory is simply without a government. The starvation that we are seeing on television is partly the result of drought (or so we are told), partly of overpopulation, and partly of the chaotic conditions flowing from the absence of any governmental authority...The fact is that this dreadful situation cannot possibly be put to rights other than by the establishment of a governing power for the entire territory, and a very ruthless, determined one at that. It could not be a democratic one, because the very prerequisites for a democratic political system do not exist among the people in question.<sup>85</sup>

The publication of Kennan's dire predictions at a point when the intervention appeared in many ways to have gone off course and when parts of Somalia remained troubled by violence could function as confirmation of the need for immediate American withdrawal for those who favoured such action. Like many of the previous narratives which present Somalia as the 'failed' state unable to be saved by the benevolent West, Kennan portrays the American public as well-meaning and idealistic,

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<sup>85</sup> George Kennan, "Somalia, Through a Glass Darkly", *The New York Times*, September 30, 1993.

deeply moved and motivated by images of suffering on their television screens and on newspaper pages. Kennan suggests that this sympathy is naïve, “an emotional reaction, not a thoughtful or deliberate one.” He insists that ‘rational’ policymaking must be separated from these emotional urges. The implication of this separation between moral and rational is that Somalia can then be reduced to a place of chaos and problems which America is unable to resolve. In the stronger terms used by Kennan as well as several others, Somalia is portrayed as a place of endemic conflict and violence, where such an existence is ‘natural’ and to be expected. It is thus excusable to leave such people to “ruthless” governance, since they are not ‘naturally’ inclined to democratic systems. While this particular article is an extreme example of this perspective, it was soon to become more commonplace after the disastrous events of October 3-4, 1993.

Initial reports of the ‘Black Hawk down’ events came on October 4 in both newspapers. They report that at least five American troops were killed and many more wounded when two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down during a mission over Mogadishu which involved the capture of twenty high-ranking Aidid supporters. Because only minimal information about the incidents had been confirmed by American and UN military leaders in Mogadishu and also because of low numbers of journalists on site to report the incident directly, further details of events did not fully emerge in print until October 5.

While an October 5 BBC item claims that infamous images of US soldiers’ bodies have increased American desire for revenge against Aidid and mention of the extra troops being sent is made, the report, like the other media items, also emphasizes growing US domestic pressure for troops to leave Somalia. Footage of two Congressmen urging an immediate American exit from Somalia depicts Republican Curt Weldon calling Somalia “an urban guerrilla nightmare” brought onto the US because it allowed its troops to be used for “the grand designs of United Nations bureaucrats”.<sup>86</sup> This discourse for understanding Somalia works on the premise that

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<sup>86</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, October 5, 1993.

the missions against Aidid had been almost exclusively designed, pursued and commanded by UN forces, not US troops, a fact which, as mentioned in past chapters, neglects to acknowledge the extent to which UNOSOM II command was comprised of American personnel. Closing on more imagery of the downed helicopters, the BBC report comments that growing casualties and the sight of American hostages will have brought back “haunting memories” of Vietnam, Iran and the Gulf War, but suggests that a desire for revenge could draw the US deeper into a “regional quagmire”.<sup>87</sup>

An ABC *Nightline* program on October 5 devoted to discussion of the situation in Somalia spent more time analysing and viewing the ‘Black Hawk down’ images, showing footage similar to the BBC item. The images of bodies being dragged were quickly self-censored by most American media outlets after only one to two days of airing but they were shown extensively on this program, which airs much later than primetime. The program opened directly with the controversial images of a dragged soldier and the hostage Durant and then moved to interviews on the street with American citizens. The quotes were cut to sound bites which included, “we went to help them and now in return they’re killing our men”, “we have no business over there” and “they’re making toys of us”.<sup>88</sup> Each of these comments reflected different ways of interpreting the events including obfuscation of the change in operations, a national interest only view, and concern over the way that US prestige and standing had been affected by the events.

Cokie Roberts introduced the program following these clips by describing them as American “outrage and anguish over what’s happening to Americans in Somalia” and with this choice of words delimited the program’s scope of concern to American losses over all others. Unsurprisingly given this choice in focus, the program goes on to explore opinion polls of US citizens’ views on how operations in Somalia should continue which includes the statistic that 79% of those polled believed that the US should pull out of Somalia even if this could lead to another famine. These poll figures

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<sup>87</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, October 5, 1993.

<sup>88</sup> ABC *Nightline*, October 5, 1993.

are interspersed with footage of Somalis cheering over the American corpses and beating scraps of destroyed military equipment. Journalist Mark Huband is quoted saying that the US and UN have lost control of the streets in Mogadishu, meaning that they are easy targets for Somali gunmen.

Senators Paul Simon and Phil Gramm were guests on the program; their divergent views on the issue of what to do after the Black Hawk incident made up the final half of the news item. Roberts pushed both men on the idea of sending reinforcements to protect existing troops, asking if this is not like the “incrementalism that got us into Vietnam”. This issue is not picked up directly by either senator, although Phil Gramm believes that existing troops must be protected until they can be removed as quickly as possible from a “fuzzy” operation in nation-building. Paul Simon agrees that the hunt for Aidid has driven the mission off course but emphasises that positive developments are occurring elsewhere in Somalia, where many UN troops are undertaking logistical work rather than ‘search and destroy’ missions. Gramm articulates what is perhaps the most important point of the night when he counters this statement with the issue that audiences don’t *see* troops doing development work but rather those who have drifted into combat situations that they shouldn’t have. The importance of public perception for policymaking is made particularly explicit here. In a sense, the value of what has been accomplished elsewhere in Somalia is devalued due to its lack of media coverage. These activities are already *not* what Somalia will be remembered for because they were rarely represented as valuable parts of the mission’s work. This situation is a good illustration of the cyclical processes of agenda-setting and reinforcement of particular stories in which both the media and government were engaged. Low media coverage of Somalia in general, and particularly in areas outside of Mogadishu, may have been a result of many factors including perceived lack of public interest in these people and places and dangers or difficulties of travel on the part of the media. Within Mogadishu, the attacks on suspected Aidid hideouts offered more ‘dramatic’ military imagery and stories concentrated on US troops. If the media reported on these events, UN and US forces’ leaders were asked for comments; these

'official' statements then tended to generate more news. In a media sphere where print space and air time for a 'developing' country, even one where US troops were involved, is generally low, reports from Mogadishu came to dominate media coverage of Somalia after June 1993.

Following the initial appearance of the 'Black Hawk down' images, editorialized items in all media sources began to adopt a fairly consistent and interconnected range of explanations for why the events had happened and what they 'said' about American and UN policies. A common approach, as suggested by the inclusion of dissenting American voices to the intervention in the initial coverage of 'Black Hawk down', was one of outrage or frustration at the naivety of the US for getting involved in the UN phase of the intervention, thus creating a divide between 'good' American policy and 'bad' UN approaches. An October 6, 1993 editorial piece in *The New York Times* urged the US to get out of Somalia, arguing that "the nature of the mission changed dramatically in June, right after Washington turned control over to the UN."<sup>89</sup> Boutros-Ghali and Admiral Howe were specifically criticized for their role in encouraging the policy of hunting down Aidid and the 'success' of the US-run UNITAF mission is distanced from the disasters of UNOSOM II, despite the extensive presence of Americans in senior leadership positions of UNOSOM II. Another editorial reinforces this opinion, claiming that "the heart of the problem remains the highly personalized vendetta that has developed between the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and a single Somali warlord, Mohammed Farah Aidid."<sup>90</sup> UN direction of the summer 1993 hunt for Aidid is thus specifically positioned as the goal of a non-American figure.

Americans are portrayed as needing to feel "no shame in withdrawing" since the mission in Somalia changed from a humanitarian gesture to an armed conflict which, according to this argument, happened without American approval. Several articles in *The Times* also support this explanation of the failure. A *Sunday Times* article expressing the views of John Drysdale, a senior political advisor to the UN in Somalia,

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<sup>89</sup> "Spell It Out to the UN on Somalia", *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993.

<sup>90</sup> "Time to Get Out", *The New York Times*, October 8, 1993.



quotes him claiming that “[Admiral] Howe had created a ‘make believe’ world in his reports back to America about the situation in Mogadishu. He has created illusions which have resulted in a total misreading of the political situation and thus inappropriate measures have been taken”.<sup>91</sup>

The failure of the Somalia mission is tied in several following *Times* articles to larger issues of rapid American disillusionment with “UN-led multilateralism in foreign policy” and the foreign policy “inconsistency, not to say incoherence” of the Clinton administration.<sup>92</sup> One *Times* article, whose sentiment is echoed in other items, declares that the UN has realized, in the wake of the ‘Black Hawk down’ events, that it is not capable of undertaking peace enforcement operations with mixed groups of forces. This realization is used to justify suggestions of a reversion to traditional peacekeeping and a re-thinking of the cooperative possibilities that had been praised at the beginning of the UNOSOM operations.<sup>93</sup> More than two weeks after the ‘Black Hawk down’ events, longer items, for example in *The New York Times*, began to explore “a more complex picture of a policy with wider support in Washington than the Administration has acknowledged”<sup>94</sup> but these investigations received less air and print space than official comments from both Congressional leaders and President Clinton. Both these groups worked hard to distance the American policy from the disaster of ‘Black Hawk down’.

Because of the perceived shift from a ‘proper’ US-led humanitarian mission to the ‘disastrous’ UNOSOM II manhunt, guilt is lifted from an American public that “did not sign on to armed intervention in the clan politics of a chaotic country that poses no international threat.”<sup>95</sup> A *Times* editorial which quoted several Congresspeople whose offices were flooded with calls from horrified American television viewers after the airing of the dragged body images also holds examples of the ‘quagmire’ perspective

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Ellis, “UN Aide Blasts ‘Incompetence’ in Somalia”, *The Sunday Times*, October 10, 1993.

<sup>92</sup> Wolfgang Munchau, “Widows and Yellow Ribbons Feed American Anguish”, *The Times*, October 11, 1993.

<sup>93</sup> James Bone, “Somalia Debacle Curbs UN Ambitions on World Stage”, *The Times*, October 12, 1993.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Gordon with John Cushman Jr., “Mission in Somalia; After Supporting Hunt for Aidid, US Is Blaming UN for Losses”, *The New York Times*, October 18, 1993.

<sup>95</sup> “Time to Get Out”, *The New York Times*, October 8, 1993.

and the idea that Somalia is not strategically worth the cost of losing American troops. This cost calculation also appears to take on a moral and personalized sense in the statement of a Congresswoman: "Somalia was 'not worth one American life,' said Dana Rohrabacher, a Californian Republican."<sup>96</sup>

Several editorial pieces which favoured a measured, slow American withdrawal from Somalia, as advocated by President Clinton, also remained critical of the UN and convinced that UN forces would have much to learn from the US military before the two could operate together successfully. The prevailing belief that US troops should never be placed under UN command appears to have only been reinforced by the Black Hawk episode, as was the belief that Somalia was not going to be a successful case for this unlikely joint relationship. Hope for Somalia was easily dismissed using the Orientalist terms that had been used so frequently before: "we should have no illusions that we, or anyone, will ever create a democratic government there [Somalia]...The diplomats should get the Somali factions together, declare a Somali government and pronounce the UN operation over. And soon."<sup>97</sup>

The portrayal of Somalia as a hopeless situation which needed to be abandoned and avoided in future was also continually perpetuated through use of the now familiar 'Vietnam' comparison. A further October 6, 1993 article in *The New York Times* quotes bereaved relatives and friends of American victims of the 'Black Hawk down' events despairing that America is about "to get embroiled in another Vietnam-type situation" and commenting that their sons' deaths were in vain given that many troops were never able to assist with the humanitarian aspects of the intervention, which were known about and supported by the American public.<sup>98</sup> These feelings reflected those of many Americans who became disillusioned with the actions of the military in Vietnam after initially supporting American involvement there. A *New York Times* editorial piece on October 7 supports a perception of the Somalia intervention as a flawed and

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<sup>96</sup> Martin Fletcher, "Clinton Dilemma as Congress Erupts Over Somali Taunts", *The Times*, October 6, 1993.

<sup>97</sup> Bob Kerrey, "Not So Fast on Somalia", *The New York Times*, October 7, 1993.

<sup>98</sup> Don Terry, "The Somalia Mission: A Search for Words to Mourn Troops Who Died in Somalia", *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993.

perhaps impossible mixture of two objectives, one military and one humanitarian. The situation is again related to Vietnam as a case where Americans naively became involved in an area of which they had little understanding.<sup>99</sup> Americans' surprise, anger and ignorance about the dramatically altered nature of their involvement in Somalia since the deaths of the Pakistani peacekeepers was obvious in comments like those of Senator Phil Gramm of Texas: "The people who are dragging American bodies don't look very hungry to the people of Texas."<sup>100</sup>

An article for the cultural desk of *The New York Times* illustrates the ways in which the UNITAF and UNOSOM II operations, though commonly separated and contrasted in media coverage, could also be conflated. The article claims that the young soldier dragged by Somalis in the infamous image "was in Somalia as part of an effort to feed people."<sup>101</sup> Such comments overlooked four months of ongoing violence between American troops and Somalis and neglecting the fact that Special Forces troops like the Rangers and Deltas were in Somalia specifically to hunt Aidid. They allowed some audiences and readers to overlook many of their country's more destructive acts in Somalia by extending and emphasising the initial humanitarian efforts. The Ridley Scott-directed action film depicting the events, *Black Hawk Down*, made a similar omission in its introduction, failing to describe any of the negative impacts of months of attacks on Mogadishu, while emphasising the American role as humanitarians. The opening scene of the film involves American troops witnessing alleged Aidid gunmen attacking civilians at a food delivery point as late as October 2, 1993; civilians are shown desperately grabbing for spilled grain. This scenario is unlikely, given that the famine situation in Somalia, particularly around Mogadishu, was largely under control by then. The scene reinforces a sense of Somali civilian need

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<sup>99</sup> Anna Quindlen, "Public & Private: We're Outta There", *The New York Times*, October 7, 1993.

<sup>100</sup> Clifford Krauss, "The Somalia Mission: White House Tries to Calm Congress", *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993.

<sup>101</sup> Walter Goodman, "Review/Television: The Effect of Images on Governmental Policy", *The New York Times*, October 7, 1993.

and desire for the Americans' presence, which would have been dubious at this point in light of their recent actions.<sup>102</sup>

The end result of such discourses, however, like interpretations of the mission as fatally flawed due to the supposedly differing goals of the UN and US, was that Somalia came to be viewed as a hopeless case initially taken on by an overly generous America, but which now had to be abandoned. A first page October 9, 1993 article in *The New York Times*, reminiscent of the ABC *Nightline* piece, expressed the desires of many Americans to bring the troops home as quickly as possible, despite President Clinton's stated plans for a gradual withdrawal. Interviews with several American citizens are used to illustrate the power of the 'Black Hawk down' images to shift public opinion on an issue that previously had not been creating very much interest. The comment of one man sums up many of the shared feelings expressed in the article:

"Somalia is not a sophisticated Western society," said Pat Finley, a retired paper company executive from Atlanta. "We keep blundering into these kinds of places because of our natural American generosity. But sooner or later we're going to have to face up to the cold fact that this is another of those countries where we can't impose democracy at an acceptable cost, if at all. They're not ready for it, can't handle it yet."<sup>103</sup>

Interestingly, some American troops who had been involved in the raids against Aidid, along with a few of their family members, were among what appeared from media reports to be a minority who supported a continued hunt for Aidid. In their case, it was largely the American policy u-turn from hunting Aidid to negotiating with him, occasionally labelled a policy of 'constructive ambiguity', which was the key issue of contention. Brought to Somalia with the understanding that taking out Aidid was crucial for peace in the country, the troops resented seeing the man responsible for the deaths of their colleagues suddenly treated as a legitimate party in peace talks. Although the switch in discursive and policy approaches towards Aidid irritated some,

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<sup>102</sup> *Black Hawk Down*, a Ridley Scott directed film, screened 2001.

<sup>103</sup> B. Drummond Ayres Jr., "The Somalia Mission: Voices; A Common Cry Across the US: It's Time to Exit", *The New York Times*, October 9, 1993.

many others, however, came to much the same 'hopeless' position on Somalia as other Americans: "'I don't see anything in this country worth our people dying for,'" said Sgt. Kevin Cook, a squad leader in the company's third platoon. 'This is an African problem. Let Africans fix it. These people are killing each other just because they can.'"<sup>104</sup>

Television coverage after the initial airing of the dragging images and shots of Michael Durant overwhelmingly focused on the controversy surrounding how to handle the incident in the Western world. An October 6 item on BBC showed almost no images from Somalia, instead depicting President Clinton making short comments about the need for a measured withdrawal as well as shots of American senators on both sides of the debate about withdrawal timing. While a brief image shows Americans patrolling Somali streets on foot, given the extremely tense relationship between UN forces and Somalis post-'Black Hawk down' there is good reason to suspect that this may not be current footage, though the voiceover does not tell viewers otherwise.<sup>105</sup> ABC likewise showed and had very little to say about conditions for Somalis post-'Black Hawk down' incidents. Conditions in the country are described as dangerous enough that few American journalists have returned; ABC consequently relied on the BBC's Roger Hearing to provide additional information in reports on October 7 and 8. Like BBC, these items also focused on images of Clinton discussing his belief in the need to "stay the course" and not to let the helicopter downings shake American resolve in Somalia.<sup>106</sup> Images of military equipment being loaded and unloaded also dominate the visual aspect of these reports.

As time passed after the October 3-4 events, news coverage of the area as a whole dropped off dramatically both in quantity and in depth of coverage. An October 20, 1993 report in *The New York Times* mentioned that American troops had ended any efforts to patrol Mogadishu, confining their role solely to defending other UN patrol groups as needed. A further article on October 21 described life as "returning to

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<sup>104</sup> Douglas Jehl, "Somalia GI's: They're Bitter and Grousing", *The New York Times*, October 15, 1993.

<sup>105</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, October 6, 1993.

<sup>106</sup> ABC news, October 7, 1993.

normal” in Somalia but mentioned tension in Mogadishu over whether fighting would recommence as soon as US troops pulled out at the end of March 1994. This fear appeared to be justified on October 25, when an ABC report opened with the statement that Aidid and Ali Mahdi had aimed their guns at each other again and US troops had this time been ordered to stay out of the way.<sup>107</sup>

Reports of violence in Mogadishu continued sporadically after this particular item but, once the new American policy of gradual withdrawal was articulated post-‘Black Hawk down’, coverage generally fell off to levels comparable to before media recognition of the famine. Although the US attempted to play the role of tough mediator and chair at Somali peace talks neither the Americans themselves nor many of the Somali factional leaders wanted any more US involvement in Somalia and eagerly awaited the withdrawal of American and UN forces. Somali citizens, the ongoing and principal victims of the conflict and intervention, remained invisible during this period in media coverage of Somalia. With few exceptions, they had disappeared from view before the tragic events of ‘Black Hawk down’ had even taken place. Representations of the Somali people, so often lost from view in broader discussions of Western policy and its relationship to their country, will be explored in the following chapter.

### **Sum-up of Major Themes**

Through its categorisation of analysed media, this chapter has suggested that most themes in the coverage of Somalia revolve around broad ideas of ‘place’ and ‘people’. With reference to ‘place’, the timing of events in Somalia immediately at the end of the Cold War period meant that long-held discursive distinctions between the capitalist ‘West’, communist states, and non-aligned areas were becoming less meaningful geopolitical classifications. New vocabularies for understanding world affairs, while often optimistic about the increased possibilities for multilateral action, were often equally cynical about the hope of international interventions, and more generally about the future of much of the recently-decolonised world. In many cases,

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<sup>107</sup> ABC news, October 25, 1993.

the choice of hope or pessimism appeared to depend on what role the US decided to take as the world's predominant superpower.

Media discourses regarding Somalia reflected the vacillations between these two generalised positions amongst predominately Western policymakers and commentators. While occasional items appeared expressing hope in UN bodies, or alternately the bodies and technologies of American soldiers, cynical reporting regarding Somalia's possibilities of transformation from 'failed state' status were more numerous. This cynicism was based both on doubt that the 'developed' world had the long-term will to assist these states but also hinged on deficiencies attributed to Somalia as a place. Somalia was presented as 'doomed' to failure in a variety of ways, which have been illustrated above with coverage examples. Significantly, although Western and Soviet Cold War involvement in Somalia was occasionally recognised to have had an impact on the Horn state's decline into violence, the political, and often economic, specifics of how these relationships with 'developed' states had previously worked and were, in fact, continuing to affect the situation were only rarely explored. Instead, colourfully-worded descriptions of Somalia's disasters placed this state among a group of nations, particularly within 'Africa', destined for 'failure'. In many cases, particularly in *The Times* and on ABC, a 'tragic' genre of narrative replaced an analytical one.



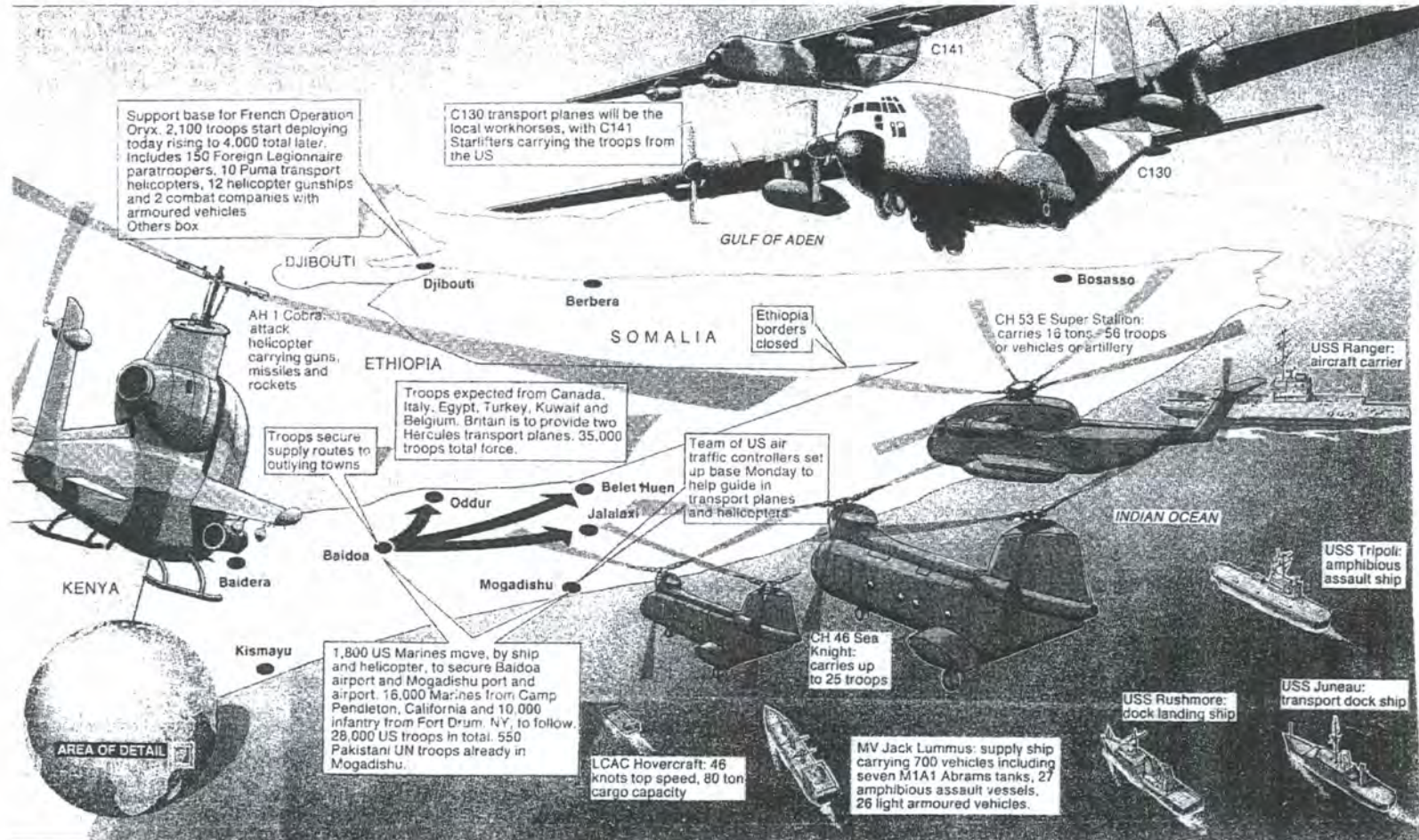
**Image 3:** Dead woman – ABC *Nightline* December 1, 1992



**Image 4:** Commercial break cut-away image – ABC *Nightline* December 8, 1992



Image 5: Infographic showing military hardware – *Times of London*  
December 9, 1992



# Marines bring mercy at the end of a gun



**Image 6(i):** Marines come ashore onto Mogadishu beaches – *ABC Nightline*  
December 8, 1992



Advance party outnumbered ten to one by the media as mission begins to save the starving

# US Marines go ashore in Somalia

By Scott Petersen in Mogadishu and Stephen Robinson in Washington

AN ADVANCE party of American Marines went ashore in rubber landing boats at the Somali capital of Mogadishu early today, signalling the beginning of the United Nations-sanctioned mission to save hundreds of thousands of Somalis from starvation. There were farcical scenes on the beach at Mogadishu as Operation Restore Hope began under a full moon and the glare of television lights.

Two groups, totalling about 10 Navy frogmen, broke the surface of a calm Indian Ocean and ran up the beach followed by cameramen and reporters.

One reporter was challenged with a "Get Your Hands Up" order. As the Navy frogmen sprinted up the beach newsmen yelled questions at them, asking who they were and what were their immediate objectives.

Later a handful of Marines, their faces streaked with camouflage paint, posed for photographs before almost 100 reporters and photographers. They were heavily armed with M16 rifles and anti-tank missile systems. Not a shot was fired.

The Marines and Navy special forces were charged with securing the airport and seaport at Mogadishu to allow the airlift of the remaining US force into the East African country in the days ahead.



In the limelight: a Marine goes ashore

green, appeared irritated by the media presence and the bright television lights of the American networks played havoc with their night vision goggles. The Marines, most of them

blame for the Hollywood-like scenes because its officials had given the media advance warning of the time and exact location of the landing. Indeed, just as the first forces came ashore, a media advisory started arriving by fax in foreign media offices in Washington.

It gave precise details of where journalists should stand, "to the inland side of the runway" at Mogadishu airport or "in the vicinity of the control tower".

The journalists were warned they would be asked to move about one hour after the landing, to allow the Marines an unobstructed view of the operation.

After initially rejecting the use of American force in Somalia, the Pentagon is now conscious of the public relations benefits of the operation. At this stage and before a single American casualty, public opinion is overwhelmingly behind President Bush's decision to



Press invasion: American soldiers are surrounded by cameramen after landing on the beach at Mogadishu

Picture: AP



**Image 7:** Paul Lowe photo – media follow arriving US troops, December 1992

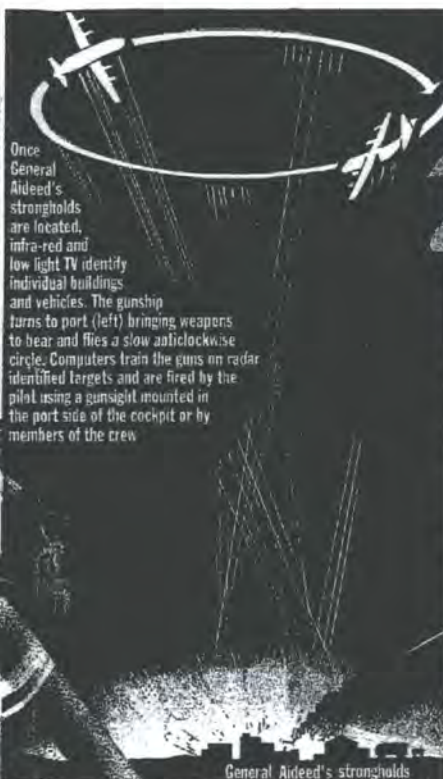




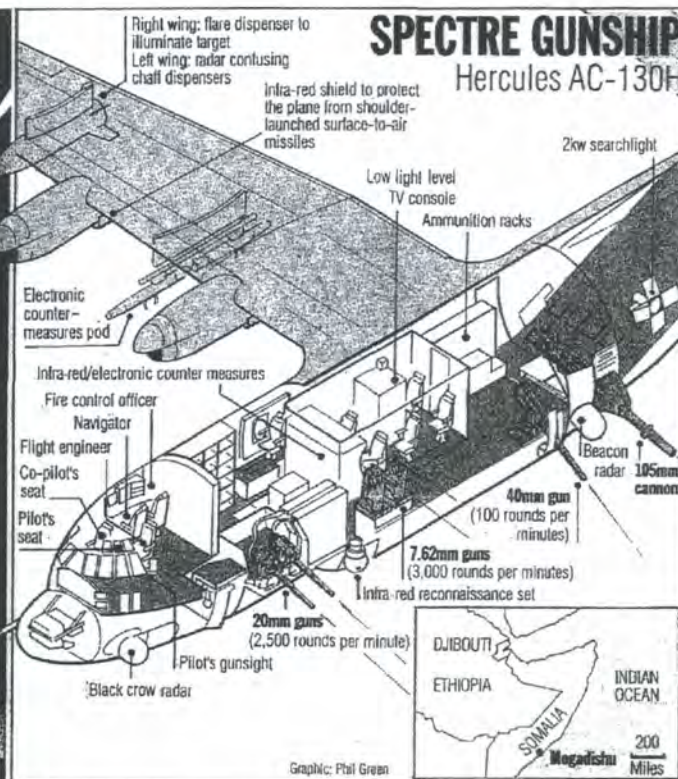
## WORLD NEWS



Attacking at night the AC-130H Spectre II, illuminating the target with searchlight and flares, can devastate an area of 12,000 square yards with its rapid fire guns. Forward looking infra-red sensors and low light TV allow the crew to see at night or through cloud



Once General Aideed's strongholds are located, infra-red and low light TV identify individual buildings and vehicles. The gunship turns to port (left) bringing weapons to bear and flies a slow anticlockwise circle. Computers train the guns on radar identified targets and are fired by the pilot using a gunsight mounted in the port side of the cockpit or by members of the crew



# ENTER THE TERMINATOR

EARLY today America unleashed its second wave of high-tech revenge for the killing of United Nations forces in Mogadishu, the Somali

## US takes its revenge for massacre of the peacemakers

said: "The country is full of secret arms caches. So today we have started a disarmament process." He declared

## **Chapter Five – From Beachhead to ‘Black Hawk Down’: Stereotypes in Somalia; Passive Victims, Aggressive Killers & Their ‘Saviours’**

The ways in which people were represented during the Somalia intervention are closely linked to themes in coverage regarding Somalia as a place. Cynicism about the possibilities for peace in Somalia was visually and rhetorically developed not only from broad statements about the country’s collapse into anarchy but through specific discussions of how its citizens had directly contributed to its decline. This chapter will focus heavily on the cultural stereotyping of Somalis, which tended to encourage an overwhelming focus on violence and discord within the culture. Specifically, the actions of ‘protection’ squads and factional leaders were routine subjects of discussion, rather than collaborative rebuilding work which was being done. Similar to the structure of ‘place’ discourses, this understanding played down the long-term effects of the Siad Barre dictatorship in the country, and Western and international involvement with this regime. Media coverage primarily focused on description of present situations, where two extreme categories of ‘Somali’ appeared to be evident.

Through this polarised interpretive lens, women and children were presented overwhelmingly as victims, although their involvement in later violence against Westerners was remarked upon. Women’s efforts at promoting peace and rebuilding were rarely given more than passing reference except in very occasional ‘special interest’ stories, which were mostly confined to print media. Men, particularly youths, were made responsible for the bulk of societal problems and a certain degree of fatalism about their behaviour could often be read as an indictment against the ‘character’ of the entire population. This gendered stereotyping is a common representational element of other ‘African’ humanitarian problems, suggesting a widespread linking of discourses of irrationality, violence, cruelty and aggression with ‘black’ men. As a chapter section discussing the near-contemporaneous beating of African-American motorist, Rodney King by white police officers will show, these discourses are not

solely developed along inside/outside lines which are congruent with the borders of nation-states. The 'threat' of black, particularly black male, violence is often portrayed as lurking just under the surface of domestic life within America and other Western states as well.

As UNOSOM II's mandate progressively narrowed to focusing almost exclusively on the hunt for General Aidid in Mogadishu, the narrow nature of the mission's own vision became clear. Somalia's success or failure in rebuilding itself was increasingly tied to the actions of one factional leader, who was focused upon to the detriment of other sectors of international effort in the country. To a large extent, the mainstream Western media followed and supported this policy simplification by narrowing their own scope of coverage to the Aidid 'hunt'. Geographically, the focus on Mogadishu literally turned audiences' vision away from other regions and stories within Somalia, while the focus on a single Somali leader as the primary cause of the country's problems illustrated a significant oversimplification of Somalia's political, social and economic situation.

Western aid workers and policymakers also were often portrayed in binary opposition to those they had come to aid. Westerners, rather than Somalis, were often key media informants during early stages of the intervention; a frequent focus on the comments and opinions of American troops in later coverage tended to reinforce America-centred understandings of what had occurred in Somalia. Again, as with gendered stereotypes, there are deeper currents of Orientalism in this approach. Westerners are frequently presumed to have greater 'objectivity' and interpretive capability to comment on Somalia than is possible for residents of the country. Further, it is the Western and American angle to the situation which matters; this is the perspective from which action and solutions are expected to come to Somalia. While they were imaged and described extensively during certain key time periods, one of the obvious similarities across all media coverage is that Somali citizens rarely narrate their own stories and experiences in any depth. While particular journalists, such as Jane Perlez of *The New York Times*, quoted Somali relief workers and citizens regularly in

articles, many media items, particularly on television, did not do this. Western media more regularly depended on Western aid workers, leaders and spokespeople for the UN and US interventions in Somalia and, once they had arrived in the country, on American troops to provide 'first hand' information for their stories. The problems created by Somalis being spoken for, rather than spoken to, went beyond merely affecting their media representation. It likely also significantly influenced the way in which negotiations with warring factions were handled and the ways that Western organisations involved themselves in the state.

With important exceptions, predominantly in *The New York Times* and on BBC, Western media coverage, and later the *Black Hawk Down* film, conceptualized events in Somalia not in terms of Somali politics, economics and social structures but instead through this conflict's implications for American foreign policy and international peacekeeping practices. In many cases, this practice literally caused the daily lives and realities of Somalis to disappear from foreign vision and planning practices. To a significant extent, this lack of Somali voices may be a practical consequence of the low numbers of Westerners who spoke Somali languages, thus making translators a necessity for conducting many media interviews or engaging with much of the local population. Adding to this problem, violence in Somalia led to large refugee flows and many Somalis who were able to leave the country were those with significant education and Western language skills who might have acted as local coordinators and spokespeople. It often appears, however, that media personnel did not make significant efforts to communicate with Somali citizens, choosing instead to present stories whose content did not require public engagement. Communication was also a major obstacle for the US military once they arrived in Somalia. Of 1.8 million members of the US armed forces, only seven people spoke Somali. A *New York Times*



article mentions that one of these speakers had to be tracked down to record messages for use in the military's pacification program.<sup>1</sup>

In a similar fashion to the previous chapter, predominant themes under the broad "Stereotypes in Somalia" category will now be studied in depth with specific examples from media coverage. The sub-sections will cover representations of Somali men and boys, who were often perceived as violent threats to social and economic stability in ways which are reminiscent of the 'ghetto' threat commonly used to describe black men outside of Somalia as well. The Rodney King example will provide evidence of the widespread currency of these discourses. Women and children's use primarily as visual representations of passivity, suffering and need will also be investigated, along with limited media attempts to challenge this representation, as well as the positioning of Western aid workers, policymakers and, later, soldiers as primary voices for describing the condition of Somalis, in place of citizens themselves. A final focus on representation of 'Black Hawk down' and the lead-up to its taking-place will conclude by illustrating the ways in which this event ended up rendering all Somalis as ungrateful threats to caring, primarily-white interveners, a theme which, again, is commonly used in other circumstances to explain the continued suffering of those in 'developing' countries or stigmatised social groups.

### **Aid Workers: Primary Storytellers & Trusted Voices**

With some exceptions, aid workers were the primary narrators of analysed stories about Somalis and their crises in the early days of Western involvement. Sam Kiley's articles on the work of Italian doctor Analena Tonelli present her as a hero, running her medical care and food service programs with privately-raised funds "(i)n the face of overwhelming logistical problems and extreme danger".<sup>2</sup> The article's discussion of Dr. Tonelli's Somali patients revolves primarily around children, many of

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Schmitt, "Mission to Somalia: Ready for Battle, Troops Storm Beach But Find No Enemy", *The New York Times*, December 9, 1992. This article also provides the information that there are only seven Somali speakers in a 1.8 million-strong US armed services.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Kiley, "Treatment Fails to Help Starving Somali Children", *The Times*, May 18, 1992.

whom are said to be unlikely to recover due to “holocaust”-like scenes they have witnessed. A Kiley article in *The Times* documents the starvation deaths of three children in the streets of the Somali city of Merca and describes aid workers as “staggered by the indifference of wealthy Somalis to the plight of their own people.” “There are still plenty of people stealing what they can and stashing the money overseas. One thing is sure, nothing comes back here unless it is to buy arms or pay soldiers,” a director of an aid programme said. “They are just terribly selfish,” Dr. Tonelli agreed.”<sup>3</sup> Somali adults, particularly men, are thus represented as threatening the survival of Somali children, for whom they are portrayed as unwilling or unable to care. This job must thus fall to the hands of primarily white Westerners, who, in contrast, are risking their lives to do unselfish good. Jane Perlez similarly based one of her *New York Times* articles on the personalisation of a single, heroic aid worker. In this case, Irish Concern nurse Anita Ennis is followed through her daily routine at a Baidoa feeding camp and her devoted work to save a young boy is described in depth.<sup>4</sup>

This focus on aid workers’ perspectives may be partly explained by the circumstances under which many photographers and journalists operated in Somalia. According to Paul Lowe, a photojournalist in Somalia during August and December 1992, it was common for media personnel to base themselves at an aid agency compound, as it was possible to live cheaply this way and to use the agencies’ bases for security and local connections.<sup>5</sup> Western aid workers spoke European languages and were thus easier to communicate with than the average Somali for most journalists. Likely because of the challenges involved in communicating with Somalis themselves, aid workers’ comments frequently were used as authoritative and informative sources for reports on the condition of Somali people.

Frequent discussion of aid as needing to be directed specifically and overwhelmingly at children is evident in many articles and is likely indicative of the

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<sup>3</sup> Sam Kiley, “Famine Invades a City Spared by War”, *The Times*, May 13, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Perlez, “As Much of a Nation Starves, a Young Somali Grasps Life”, *The New York Times*, August 17, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Author’s interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

belief of media and aid industry personnel that children would inspire the most generosity from Western publics and were the most 'innocent' and 'helpless' victims in the conflict. This focus was especially evident when aid workers attempted to speak through the media to potential aid donors: "'Despite the barriers in Somalia—the violence, the looting, the wackos with guns out there—the cause is not totally helpless, and some good is being done,' Mr. Clark said. 'People can indeed make a contribution to a private relief group and have confidence that some children will be reached.'"<sup>6</sup> Images of 'suffering' children and mothers also predominate during a high point of media famine coverage of Somalia in August and September 1992, again likely indicative of the media's belief in the visual power of children to capture the concern and interest of Western audiences. This type of imagery was actually persistent throughout much of the entire intervention period. BBC opened its December 7 and 8, 1992 coverage of the build-up to the US intervention with an image of an emaciated toddler as representative of Somalia's story, despite the fact that famine in the country had largely been brought under control by this point.<sup>7</sup> This focus on imagery of children, while likely assumed to be a valuable approach for fundraising, was of questionable value in fostering more complex understandings of the factors promoting and prolonging the conflict in Somalia.

During the early stages of the UNOSOM I mission, a May 9, 1992 article describing starvation and dismal conditions in one of the only remaining Mogadishu hospitals also mentions the large daily numbers of gunshot victims; "'The figure is an indication of how extreme violence has become the only form of conflict resolution that Somalis understand,' said one aid worker."<sup>8</sup> While a quote from a Somali doctor immediately following this comment attributes the high levels of violence to the desperate shortages of food for large segments of the local population, the implication in the first quote that Somalis are 'intrinsically' violent is not wholly shaken. Months later, images throughout a December 7, 1992 ABC piece still appeared to support this

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Crossette, "Crisis Is Seen For Sub-Saharan Africa", *The New York Times*, September 17, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, December 7 and 8, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Sam Kiley, "Patients Vie for Food Scraps Amid Ruins of Mogadishu", *The Times*, May 9, 1992.

earlier aid worker's categorisation, showing *khat*-chewing Somali men with guns, white aid workers treating injured Somali male patients, recycled 'famine' imagery of thin children covered in flies, and dead Somali bodies. White volunteer doctors explained that they were mostly treating gun shot wounds and declared that violence was even worse than before, as Somalis were stealing what they could in advance of US Marine arrival. The doctors are portrayed as sensitive and shocked by levels of violence in Somalia, which they claim is perpetrated by teenagers high on *khat*.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout these comments, Somali 'victims' remain mute behind the aid workers, who are positioned as spokespeople for tragedies occurring in Somalia. The relevance of *khat* and its link with Somali men will be explored in greater depth in a later section. These frequent portrayals of aid workers as Somali 'saviours' in contrast to murderous elements of its population not only failed to explore the reasons why armed gangs had come into existence but also underrepresented the many Somalis who worked for and with aid agencies, rather than merely looting or opposing their efforts. Various articles by Jane Perlez for *The New York Times* are an important deviation from this trend; Perlez often used quotes from Somali doctors and aid personnel who were actively trying to improve the situation of their fellow citizens.<sup>10</sup>

While relief workers were represented as desperate for international action on the Somali situation during the early months of 1992, their opinions of the decision to send large numbers of American troops for the UNITAF mission appeared to split when it became a possibility in November of that year. Despite difficult working conditions, many aid workers were reported as sceptical about whether armed troops would help relief shipments reach Somalis. An article in *The Times* just before the official announcement that almost thirty thousand American troops would be sent to bolster the UN relief efforts in Somalia declared that this offer would be almost universally rejected by aid agencies if it was their decision to make.<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*

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<sup>9</sup> ABC news, December 7, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> See Jane Perlez, "Somalis Try a Food Center Without Gunmen", *The New York Times*, October 29, 1992 and Jane Perlez, "Hungry Somalis Still Die But Crops Grow Too", *The New York Times*, October 23, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> James Bone & David Watts, "Somali Agencies Reject 30,000 US Troops", *The Times*, November 27, 1992.

reports concurred, describing the fears of aid workers that outside force which was not supported by local leaders would result in a unification of Somali forces against foreigners.<sup>12</sup>

This apparent u-turn in opinion highlights the ways in which a lack of contextual reporting on the economic and political factors driving the Somali famine and conflict often resulted in seemingly contradictory and confusing media coverage. By early December 1992, however, when the US had made its decision to act, comments by aid workers were less frequent and, when they were reported, more favourable. In at least one case, those who were not supportive appear to have been censored. On December 5, *The Times* reported that "Rakiya Omaar, a leading Somali activist in the United States, has been dismissed by Africa Watch, the human rights organisation, for her outspoken opposition to planned United Nations military intervention in the country."<sup>13</sup>

Once American troops entered Somalia, they briefly became important new sources of quotes and stories for media and aid workers faded somewhat from coverage. While their voices returned in a minimal sense once UN/US attacks against Aidid began, primarily as voices of opposition to these actions, Western commentators for media during this period were predominately policymakers and UNOSOM II's leaders. Their similar role in appearing as voices of reason in comparison to Somali-driven chaos will be analysed in further sections. The next four sections will now turn specifically to the representation of Somali citizen groups.

### **Passivity & Helplessness: The Dominant Representation of Women & Children**

The representation of Somali women predominantly followed patterns familiar to both audiences and media personnel from other famine situations in the 'developing' world. In this 'tradition', victims of catastrophic events, such as famine or conflict, are

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<sup>12</sup> Jane Perlez, "Somali Aid Workers Split on Troops", *The New York Times*, November 27, 1992 and William E. Schmidt, "UN Weighs Terms By US For Sending Somalia Force; Europeans Cautious", *The New York Times*, November 28, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Rhodes, "Activist Sacked By US Rights Group", *The Times*, December 5, 1992.

primarily shown to be women and children, frequently clustered together in large groups to illustrate the scale of the crisis but also routinely pictured as individuals, particularly lone children, as a reminder to audiences of the humanity and individuality of these 'victims'. Victims are rarely given the opportunity to speak for themselves, instead commonly having their plight explained by relief workers or policy experts, usually from the 'developed' world. In the case of Somalia, this type of representation was a lasting feature of the coverage, with 'famine' style images being shown months after the worst of the famine conditions had been addressed and often accompanying print articles whose subject was not famine. As with other situations in which this representational style is used, this coverage often failed to illustrate the productive activities of Somali citizens to better their own situation. In the Somali case, the dichotomization between women/victims and men/aggressors minimised the agency and abilities of women and ignored the many peaceful men whose lives were disrupted or ended by the civil war and famine. (See Image 9)

Because of the dominance of this style of representation, it is important to recognise attempts to report differently. During the first major media 'discovery' of the Somali famine, a Jane Perlez article, which appeared with photos on the front page of *The Sunday New York Times*, was one of the first times that individual Somali citizens were given press space to describe their own personal losses as a result of warfare and famine. Three of the five interviews in the article were conducted with women, two mothers and a Somali feeding station worker, who had just witnessed the death of one of their own children or a child being cared for. The images included, one of which made the front page, are of children waiting for food at a feeding centre in Baidoa and women described as 'pleading' for food at a centre.<sup>14</sup> Although the imagery appears to follow traditional patterns of representation, the use of interview material with Somali citizens is significant and relatively rare, with Perlez's articles being an exception. A similarly-styled article in *The Times* in March 1992 followed the story of a young Somali female aid worker's struggle to help her family flee the dangers of Mogadishu to

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<sup>14</sup> Jane Perlez, "Deaths In Somalia Outpace Delivery Of Food", *The New York Times*, July 19, 1992.

refugee camps on the Kenyan border. The story illustrates the creative and productive efforts of a young woman to save her family and continue her vocation in relief work; she is not merely a passive victim of her circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

The extent to which these articles deviated from media 'norms' of who Somalis were and how they behaved can be seen as the situation of 'famine' and 'anarchy' in Somalia became a more widely-covered media story in mid to late 1992. Few Western media cameras had been on location to record the earlier and worst stages of the famine in 1991 and early 1992; estimates of deaths and predicted deaths had to serve instead to illustrate the scale of the Somalia disaster. When the decision was made for US troops to intervene in late 1992, however, these 'famine' images became important for reinforcing why troops were being sent. Montages of images which introduced television items on Somalia as American troops prepared to enter the country represented life there through images of crying children and thin women alternated with images of men and boys with guns.<sup>16</sup> While a few stories emerged in December and January 1993 which highlighted the success of US troops at delivering aid supplies to these 'victims', television coverage of Somalia in particular was already in decline and 'feel-good' images quickly disappeared from screens along with most others.

After the killing of the Pakistani UN troops in June 1993, imagery of women and children was briefly redeployed, particularly by ABC, in what appeared to be an attempt to remind audiences of why UN and US troops had initially intervened in Somalia. One viewed ABC item on June 21, 1993 attempted to redefine life by exploring successes and improvements in rural areas outside the capital. Images of women and children are used in this item to illustrate health and well-being, as opposed to their previous role indicating social collapse. Initially, however, graphic images are shown of rotting corpses near huts and houses alongside images of starving people and fly-covered babies. These are described as images from the previous year

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<sup>15</sup> Ian Glover-James, "Somali Civil War Leaves 1.5m Facing Famine and Disease", *The Sunday Times*, March 29, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> See ABC coverage on *Nightline* November 30, 1992; December 7, 1992 news; *Nightline* December 11, 1992; and BBC 9 o'clock news, December 4, 1992.

and an aid worker reinforces their horror by saying that during famine times “bodies were left rotting, eaten by rodents and insects”.<sup>17</sup> (See Image 10) Contrasting shots then begin immediately to show the difference a year can make; a montage of images appears showing healthy, running children and a man holding wads of money at a market stall. A group of ‘healthy-weight’ children laugh and hold out food to the camera in what appears to be an orchestrated shot which then cuts to women gathering water and homes being rebuilt. (See Image 11) White aid workers attest to the massive changes the rural Somali town has undergone and the telling of a personalized story of a young Somali girl who lost her entire family to famine but now lives happy and safe in a Mogadishu orphanage adds to the theme of redemption and success.

Such a media item could not have better anticipated and supported the opinion of US Ambassador Madeleine Albright, who visited Somalia in July 1993. Albright publicly stated that she felt too much media focus was being placed on the violence in Mogadishu while positive UN work in rural areas was being ignored. While this particular item goes some way to illustrating the existence of optimism and improvement in Somalia, it is by no means representative of standard media coverage of this period which, as Albright noted, continued to focus almost exclusively on the continuing violence in Mogadishu. The item, while positive in focus, also fails to challenge the many prevailing images and narratives of Somalis which had been developed in earlier famine coverage. Voiceover emphasizes the actions of foreign UN troops or aid workers which allow Somalis to thrive, whether it be through renewed delivery of food or supervision of development in a rural setting. No Somalis are interviewed during the item but they are instead imaged and spoken for, either by the Western ‘experts’ present or through the use of voiceover. Despite the use of narrative to ‘refer’ these images to older, colonial discourses of a ‘simple’, undeveloped Africa, requiring European-assisted development, these images do at minimum provide glimpses of women and children in active roles. It is an important contrast to many

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<sup>17</sup> ABC news, June 21, 1993.



previous portrayals of them in passive, close-up shots which do not allow the surrounding circumstances and location, urban or rural, to be viewed at all.

Just one *New York Times* article stands out throughout two years coverage of the Somali situation in its exploration of women's involvement in the Somali economy, politics, and aid industries. Through an interview with a Somali woman who runs 140 Red Cross feeding centres in Mogadishu, the author, Donatella Lorch, discusses the diverse trading, money-changing and managerial roles that Somali women are successfully taking on in the wake of the deaths of traditional male providers and dramatic social upheaval. Dahabo Isse, Lorch's primary English-speaking interviewee, attributes the success of the women to their willingness to work on neutral terms across clan lines in ways that men will not. The article details the work of three other Somali women but also elaborates on their concerns about whether new governmental systems in Somalia will recognise and allow them to maintain their new statuses.<sup>18</sup>

Following their general disappearance from media images and narratives after the initial 'famine' pictures which accompanied the planning and start of the UNITAF intervention, women, and to a much lesser extent children, reappeared in coverage during the violent protests in Mogadishu in summer 1993. A September 3, 1993 photo in *The Times* showed angry Somali women, described as chanting support for Aidid. This type of image was a dramatic change in the portrayal of Somali women who, before the attacks on the Pakistanis, had been almost exclusively represented as victims of the Somali conflict. A further section will explore this change in their representation, particularly with regards to the events of 'Black Hawk down'.

### **The Somali 'Ghetto': Somali Men as Drug-Users & Violent Delinquents**

As has been illustrated in the previous section, the famine and 'anarchy' taking place in Somalia required an explanation or justification, however minimal, in media coverage of the events. A statement from Paul Lowe sums up the connections that

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<sup>18</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Somali Women Stride Ahead Despite The Scars of Tradition", *The New York Times*, December 22, 1992.

many journalists made: "I was looking for images that would juxtapose the suffering of the famine with the conflict related to it which was...very much the sort of warlord-led, clan-led conflict for control, for power."<sup>19</sup> While this statement broadly captures some of the issues involved in Somalia's crisis, it was the detail within comments such as this which media in Somalia often failed to investigate. Often originally brought into urban centres like Mogadishu by factional leaders during the civil conflict to expel Siad Barre, numbers of young Somali men were left after his fall from power with little possibility for employment in the country's war-ravaged economy. While some found work privately or with NGOs, others ended up putting their weapons to use through looting and extortion of aid supplies. It was these groups who were extensively documented and made responsible for Somalia's famine by the Western media. Widespread chewing of a stimulant leaf called *khat* was an important part of the characterization of these men and boys.

On a broad scale, Somalis in general, but Somali men in particular, were regularly portrayed as greedy and violent detriments to the peace-building processes. Rather than potential productive members of society, the majority of Somali men were understood through discourses which denoted them as 'problem' people with childlike tendencies and little comprehension of their own needs for long-term peace and development. This conceptualization had consequences for peace-building efforts and media representations of Somalia but it also relates to wider racialized discourses pertaining to non-white peoples worldwide. As with the above section on representations of women and children, media representations which attempted to challenge this portrayal of men are rare and deserve mention. One such article, published in August 1992 by Jane Perlez, describes the difficult choices that had to be made by many Somalis: whether to take up arms to secure food, money and their properties and whether to avenge family members who had been killed. Tracing an educated *Abgal* Somali man's struggle for non-violent survival with his extended family in Mogadishu, the article brings to light the perils of food shortages but also, primarily,

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<sup>19</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

the extent of gun ownership, attacks and looting in and around Mogadishu. Because of his fluent English, Omar Sabrie Abdulle, the protagonist in Perlez's story, is more able than many Somalis to tell his story and detail his concerns; he makes the point that one of the most useful things aid agencies could do to help control violence could be to buy up Somali weapons or offer food in exchange for them.<sup>20</sup>

Jane Perlez was again responsible for a detailed article on life in rural Somalia in September 1992.<sup>21</sup> With a strong focus on interview material with two Somali men, Perlez exposed the plight of Somalia's destitute rural inhabitants, whose suffering is shown to have been created not primarily by drought but by having been driven off their lands and robbed during conflict in Somalia's agricultural areas. The political and economic aspects of this fighting, while described in academic research in Chapter Three, were not discussed in analysed media coverage. The provision by the Red Cross of seeds and equipment to Somali farmers is described by both men as aiding a primarily Somali-driven effort to return to home villages and re-start agricultural livelihoods, despite the destruction of large amounts of farming infrastructure during the conflict. The above articles are important, as they provide challenges to the common gendered stereotypes into which Somali citizens were often slotted. The articles featuring stories of men highlight their efforts to support themselves and their families through non-violent and cooperative ventures.

Predominant representations of Somali men and boys are significantly different from these perspectives by Perlez. Sam Kiley of *The Times* wrote an early news item which focused particularly on the dangers of young Somali men. His 362 word article, a personal narrative about his trip to a Mogadishu gun market, describes Somalia as "a country which has collapsed into geno-suicide fuelled by khat, a strong narcotic plant which stains its users' mouths green."<sup>22</sup> Kiley describes how joking with Somalis at the market became serious when shots were fired at him by a young boy. His reaction to

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<sup>20</sup> Jane Perlez, "Mogadishu Journal: Amid Somalia's Frenzy, Family Fights to Survive", *The New York Times*, August 26, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Perlez, "Somalis Rediscover Hope in a Handful of Seeds", *The New York Times*, September 23, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Sam Kiley, "Killing Jokes Down At the Gun Market", *The Times*, July 14, 1992.

the situation is illustrative of the often difficult relationship between Somalis and Western interveners: "My gaze fell on the green lips of a child of no more than 14 curled back in a drug-crazed rage. The little blighter deserved nothing but a good hiding, a thought I keep to myself as I was bundled into my car by well-wishers howling insults at those who wanted to see whether my blood ran as red as theirs did."<sup>23</sup>

A month later, Kiley wrote another satiric article, this time documenting a road trip with some hired Somali guards. Once again, the young men are portrayed as volatile and potentially violent: "At the mercy of four uptight gunmen who, given that I had pockets full of dollars and was wearing a pair of jeans, could have stripped me and abandoned me...Or they might have just shot me for fun, so male bonding seemed the only way to get to Mogadishu."<sup>24</sup> This bonding occurs over the shooting of a small antelope, which Kiley describes as incredibly difficult given that "Somalis are unable to shoot straight. Keeping the sight close to the eye means the bang is too loud, and in any case that is not the way Rambo does it...So abandoning pacifist scruples, I taught them to aim and, after a couple of absurd misses, a male dik-dik was shot".<sup>25</sup> These grim assessments of a few Somali men nonetheless can be read as applying to the male population as a whole, suggesting that there is little reason for hope in a country composed of such characters. Such articles are especially problematic given that young Somali men, while routinely imaged, are almost never interviewed in Western media coverage and therefore are rarely permitted to exist outside their descriptions by foreign interveners.

Such anecdotal articles are rare in media coverage of Somalia; most coverage discussing problems in Somali society begins with local examples but makes these examples representative of larger, country-wide issues. Both *The Times* and *The New York Times* published articles on the looting of aid convoys, attempting to explain why this practice took place. Their coverage is similar, although *The New York Times* appears

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<sup>23</sup> Sam Kiley, "Killing Jokes Down At the Gun Market", *The Times*, July 14, 1992..

<sup>24</sup> Sam Kiley, "Teenage Gunmen Hunt Food in Somalia", *The Times*, August 14, 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

to devote more articles to this issue and to approach it from a greater variety of angles. Sam Kiley opened his September 16, 1992 *Times* piece with a description of a group of starved Somalis staring at a dead man they were too tired to bury. Meanwhile, “fit and healthy” teenage gunmen loot food aid nearby with impunity. Kiley quotes Aidid in an effort to expose his failure to stop these gunmen, who are allegedly “his” although he claims to have no control over their actions. Aidid is described as blocking UN efforts to send troops to protect aid and, along with other “warlords”, is said to be “both profiting from the Somali holocaust and by so doing ensuring that it will continue until there are no Somalis left to feed.”<sup>26</sup> As will be seen in a further section, Aidid was routinely represented as responsible for most of Somalia’s ills. His position as an important and often intransigent factional leader provided media with an ‘enemy’ figure in their Somalia stories, although there is evidence that factors in international handling of the Somali situation helped him garner much of his support.

A Kiley article on August 31, 1992 explores further injustices in Somali society by using an example of clan divisions at a feeding centre in Belet Huen, where some Somalis are alleged to have starved to death because they were told not to share a feeding centre with another clan group. For an interviewed aid worker, this is an obvious example of the greed of local Somali leaders: “‘They clearly thought that there would be something in the building and administration of the centre for them. But we don’t work that way. *Adele* is just a typical example of the mafia system of administration here. The authorities will watch people die rather than pass up the chance of a fast buck,’ said Joanna Robinson, a New Zealand nurse with the fund.”<sup>27</sup> The opening paragraph of the article illustrates the direct victims of this avarice to be Somali children; Western aid workers are shown to be prevented from saving children due to deliberate Somali obstruction of their work. Somali leaders are portrayed as indifferent to the suffering of their own people.

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<sup>26</sup> Sam Kiley, “Looters Add to Somalia’s Suffering”, *The Times*, September 16, 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Sam Kiley, “Elders Find Rich Pickings Among Misery of Camps”, *The Times*, August 31, 1992.

*The New York Times* published a similar article on February 9, 1993. Aid workers in and around Somali villages near Baidoa express their disgust that so much foreign aid is held and sold by village elders and leaders at the expense of their own people. Somali workers for various NGOs interviewed for the article are described as greedy and looking to profit from the famine situation by demanding high wages for work. Some contrasting aid worker opinions are given, indicating that they believe some trading of food aid, even if it is stolen, could help to re-establish a functioning market system in Somalia.<sup>28</sup> For the most part, however, these opinions and any exploration of issues arising when a post-conflict economy is flooded with free food were not investigated.

The major message coming out of these articles, in *The New York Times'* case supported by a comment from a Somali journalist, is that Somalis are historically tolerant of looting; these comments imply that greed and selfishness, as understood through Western eyes, are part of the cultural landscape. The chief US diplomat in Mogadishu, Robert Oakley, condensed and clarified the tone and assumptions of much media coverage when he was quoted saying, "the biggest challenge for Somalia will be its ability to assume responsibility for its own future after decades of reliance on western help... 'This country has lived off the dole for as long as I can remember. In future, Somalis will have to work harder at earning it rather than getting it.'"<sup>29</sup>

*The New York Times'* approach to the issue of looting is significantly different when investigated by Jane Perlez on September 4, 1992. While a "handful of well-connected merchants" are said to have organised the theft of much relief food in order to hoard for sale at higher prices, quotes from aid agency officials do not show particularly great concern at the statistic of only half of food aid actually reaching hungry Somalis. The director of the UN World Food Program is quoted saying that this is a reasonable amount given conditions in Somalia. A Red Cross official, while acknowledging that looting is intolerably high, is said to believe that "far more than

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<sup>28</sup> Diana Jean Schemo, "Donors Find Much Somali Aid Stolen", *The New York Times*, February 9, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Donatella Lorch, "US Envoy to Somalia Says American Mission Has Been Achieved", *The New York Times*, March 3, 1993.

half of its food reaches the hungry.”<sup>30</sup> A Somali dealer in stolen food is interviewed and expresses moral discomfort with his practices but points out that in a country with no government, no jobs and with a large family to provide for he has little choice. The politics of stealing and selling food coming into the Mogadishu port and the connection of the price of food to the value of the Somali shilling on a black currency market are investigated by Perlez through an interview with a Somali journalist. This politics is also linked to violent episodes between Ali Mahdi and Aidid, helping to give some meaning to the situation of ‘violence’ and ‘anarchy’ which is constantly stated to exist in Mogadishu while illustrating that the situation cannot be simply blamed on the dominant factional leaders or ‘warlords’ who receive most Western media coverage.

This approach is more structural than Kiley’s, focusing on larger socio-economic mechanisms rather than on personalities. Situational experiences of media personnel in Somalia, such as that of Paul Lowe, appear to support Perlez’s analysis, suggesting that many socio-economic factors continued to exist and to be relevant throughout the conflict period. These factors are valuable to consider, as evidence beyond national character types, to determine why particular events and actions take place: “In these situations routinely words like chaos and anarchy, madness, craziness are used, bandied about, but I think...if you learn how societies like that operate...they do have very clear relationships between people and places, motivators for what’s going on and it’s not anarchy...there’s a hierarchy...you’re in a place that basically functions...in some form.”<sup>31</sup>

Attempts, such as the one described above, to explore reasons beyond the mere existence of ‘violent gunmen’ for the conflict and crisis situation in Somalia were not common. A December 2, 1992 article in *The Times* describes the criminalization of Somali society, with a shocking incident chosen to open the report. A Somali child, standing on the edge of a road, is shot by a group of teenage gunmen while other

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<sup>30</sup> Jane Perlez, “Theft of Food Aid Is a Business in Starving Somalia”, *The New York Times*, September 4, 1992. Debate arose over this issue particularly when OFDA official, Andrew Natsios began to quote a figure of 80% of relief being looted to media and policymakers in November 1992. See Jane Perlez, “Somali Aid Workers Split On Troops”, *The New York Times*, November 27, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Author’s interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

Somalis look on and do nothing. While the article mentions that there is little work for men in the destroyed Somali economy besides looting, guarding or soldiering, most of the article discusses the need for a Western-style protectorate or “humanitarian recolonisation” to fix Somalia’s governing structures. Sam Kiley, the author of the article, asks how Somalia could collapse into such a state and then offers a broad answer based on Somali ‘traits’ and supposed historical worldviews: “The Somalis, predominately nomadic pastoralists living on the edge of starvation for much of their lives, inevitably regard their relationship with the world as a battle for existence. They attach no great sentimentality to family or clan bonds but see their social system as a means of survival.”<sup>32</sup> *The New York Times* presented a similar view of national decomposition and failure in a December 13, 1992 article which declared Somali nationalism to be a “myth” that hid nepotism, corruption and social discord: “In this Somalia, the narrow aim of self-advancement and political tenure ruled despite all the leaders’ protestations of serving nationhood alone...The calculus of clan politics is one that dictates the country’s present fragmentation into such closed visions of self-interest that even the stick-thin hordes of the starving from one clan draw no empathy from the warriors of another.”<sup>33</sup>

A culture understood as so ‘naturally’ prone to violence and conflict was also one which could be portrayed as incapable of change by outsiders and which needed to be engaged with as a potential threat rather than as a group of people with potential for social, political and economic regeneration. This understanding of Somali culture was partly evident on American arrival in Somalia in December 1992 when the Marines came onto the beaches of Mogadishu in ‘combat mode’, and actually arrested Somalis who had contracts to work with the UN, various NGOs and media agencies. Accompanying media images of Somali men being frisked, ordered to put their hands up or to lie prone on the ground were reminiscent of media coverage of an important

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<sup>32</sup> Sam Kiley, “Gunmen Fire At Children on a Road of Terror”, *The Times*, December 2, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Alan Cowell, “The World; One Language. One Faith. No Unity”, *The New York Times*, December 13, 1992.



American national event, which will be discussed further below.<sup>34</sup> Marines, when interviewed, described their major security concern as armed gangs “strung out on drugs”. Awareness of these groups, however, had not prepared them for the task of differentiating ‘good’ from ‘bad’ on the ground in Somalia, as was acknowledged by a Marine commander interviewed by Ted Koppel on ABC’s special December 8, 1992 coverage of the troop landing.

BBC’s coverage of the arrests during the landing was more openly critical on this point. The arrests of Somalis were labelled as a negative way to start winning hearts and minds. The images of Somali men being arrested and searched under media spotlights were shown, with voiceover declaring that the men were guarding the port, appeared unarmed and were treated in a humiliating fashion by US troops. The item explains that it took the intervention of General Imtiaz Shaheen, who had been in Mogadishu with his Pakistani group of UN peacekeepers for a few months, to explain that the men were not a threat and have them released.<sup>35</sup>

The American military’s answer to the question of disarmament on a systematic and large-scale basis, which was desired by many UN personnel and Somali civilians, also appeared to have been influenced by a particular interpretation of the Somali ‘character’. While many aid workers, Somali citizens and international personnel understood the widespread presence of weapons as dangerous both for peacekeepers and Somalis themselves, several key figures in the US military and administration countered that the process of disarmament itself was too big and too dangerous to be taken on by American troops. There was also the suggestion that such an action was not the will of the general population and was counter to their right to bear arms; “‘There are three things important to a Somali—his wife, his camel and his weapon,’ said President Bush’s special envoy to Somalia, Robert B. Oakley. ‘In the Somali soul there is the right to have a weapon. So when they hear foreigners are taking weapons

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<sup>34</sup> ABC’s special broadcast on US troop landings, December 8, 1992.

<sup>35</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, December 9, 1992.

by force, they say, 'No, never.'"<sup>36</sup> Within this article, Perlez quotes the former Somali national police commissioner urging a program of full-scale national disarmament, which he believed the vast majority of war-weary Somalis would support. This view and other statements of Somalis' desires for peace, however, were often subsumed in Western coverage by descriptions of conflict and violence and by comments on the intransigence of Somali factional leaders such as Aidid and Ali Mahdi.

### ***Khat*: Fuel to the Fire of Conflict?**

The use of *khat* by Somali men was occasionally mentioned in print coverage of the Somalia conflict which discussed the looting of aid convoys and the activities of armed groups of young Somali men. A Medecins Sans Frontieres co-ordinator, writing in *The Times* in August 1992, commented that: "Colombia has its coca leaves, Thailand its opium, the West Indies its hashish and Somalia its *qat* a small tree whose succulent leaves are the fuel of this war."<sup>37</sup> Few other print pieces state this cause-effect relationship so bluntly. Only one article in two years of print coverage, however, was found which gave a detailed report about the role of *khat* in Somali culture and also challenged the theory that it was primarily fuel to the fire of conflict there. This *New York Times* article from mid-December 1992 discusses why *khat* has not become popular in the US but also features interviews with members of the Somali and East African community in New York to understand its effects and use patterns. Interviews in cafes with visiting Somalis and various East African immigrants to the US expose many diverse beliefs about *khat*'s effects on its users. While some claim that *khat* merely gives added energy, others insist that a preoccupation with the drug can negatively affect productivity.

Despite these divergent views, "(f)or most of the men gathered in the café, it was hard to think of *khat* as a drug. 'It's just like drinking strong coffee,' said the café

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<sup>36</sup> Jane Perlez, "Must US Strip A Land Of Guns?", *The New York Times*, December 15, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Geoff Prescott, "The Clans", *The Sunday Times*, August 30, 1992.

manager.”<sup>38</sup> US drug enforcement officials who are interviewed admit to paying *khat* little attention; it is in the fourth of five dangerous drug categories, along with prescription diet pills and valium. The depth of coverage and mix of perspectives in this piece is unique; its setting, however, is New York rather than Somalia. When investigated with regards to the situation in Somalia, *khat* use is never explored culturally or economically but seen only as fuel to the existing conflict.

Discussion of *khat* was minimal but important in an ABC *Nightline* program on November 30, 1992. The program, which brought in experts to debate the possible challenges for American interveners in Somalia, opened with scenes of crying children with bloated bellies interspersed with shots of young men holding guns. Anchor Forrest Sawyer narrated over the images, describing “just how bad Somalia really is”. A further report on conditions in Somalia also used montages of imagery to create a visual link between armed men and violence in Somalia. Shots alternated between Somali men holding guns and crying women and children. Footage of dead Somalis, including faces, were then shown, along with children fighting for bits of grain dropped from food sacks.<sup>39</sup>

The US is presented as the only power capable of stopping this suffering. Sam Kiley, however, is interviewed as a counter voice to optimism about the ease with which US involvement will improve Somalia. Kiley believes that: “People will take potshots at them [US troops deployed to Somalia]. It’s rather good fun being a teenager stoned on *khat* or valium or they’re even getting hold of pharmaceutical cocaine now...charging around in a 4-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser with a cannon on the back. The idea of shooting a well-muscled Marine would be tremendously thrilling to them.”<sup>40</sup> Combined with the information in the report, Kiley’s statement positions *khat* as ‘fuel to the fire’ of conflict in Somalia, in much the same way as *The Times* item on August 30, 1992. The actions and motivations of groups of young armed men become tied specifically to drug use. Their existence throughout Somalia is not explained in

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph B. Treaster, “From Somalia to US Khat Finds a Foothold”, *The New York Times*, December 14, 1992.

<sup>39</sup> ABC news, November 30, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Sam Kiley, for *The Times*, quoted on ABC *Nightline*, November 30, 1992.

terms of broader economic and political issues but rather is posited as the primary cause of famine. Such a discourse fails to acknowledge the events and impacts of the civil war years preceding the famine and the dynamics of the famine itself, which had largely been eased by the time when plans for American troops to intervene in Somalia were being made.

The day before the US landing in Somalia ABC carried another feature on conditions in Somalia which focused extensively on *khat* chewing. The primary problem with youth chewing *khat*, one aid worker claims, is that it encourages them to cause trouble. Numerous shots are shown of young men chewing *khat* and driving in weaponized 'technical's; one man wears a hood in a style frequently attributed to African American urban youth in the West. Voiceover again explains that these men used to have 'normal' jobs; now they earn hundreds of dollars looting or working as guards and are estimated to spend half of this on *khat*.<sup>41</sup> Although a few shots are shown of a white reporter asking questions of some Somali men who appear to be selling *khat*, for the most part the entire series of images in the item is explained through voiceover. (See Image 12) Again, the item does not investigate *khat*'s historic place in Somali society or solicit opinions from many users.

While *khat* use is mentioned in both newspapers surveyed and in ABC coverage of Somalia, it is almost completely absent from analysed BBC footage. Although Somali men in a crowd shot are shown chewing what appears to be *khat*, there is no particular mention of its use by gunmen in reports on days surrounding major news stories. The absence of stories on *khat* is in line with BBC's generally lower focus on Somali 'gangs' and gunmen. More time is devoted to interview footage with factional leaders, primarily Ali Mahdi and Aidid, and with aid workers. The result, while not giving a significantly different visual picture of Somalia, does provide a voice for a greater number of perspectives beyond the American and UN intervention leadership.

As mentioned above, what is conspicuously missing from much media coverage of *khat* is analysis of its place in Somali culture and economics during the pre and post-

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<sup>41</sup> ABC news, December 7, 1992.

state collapse periods. The size of the *khat* market in Somalia is never explored. Although it is suggested that *khat* is widely used among young Somali men, the extent of its use by other segments of the population remains unclear. Photojournalist Paul Lowe elaborated in an interview that throughout the entire conflict and famine period in Somalia regular flights would arrive several times a day from Kenya and Ethiopia, bringing fresh *khat* to Somali markets. Lowe also makes the point that throughout the Somali famine, a variety of food remained available at market stalls, hinting at the extent to which the famine was a problem of access, rather than solely of shortages. According to Lowe, *khat* can be used as a key example of the fact that social and economic processes, though often informal, continued to exist in Somali society regardless of state collapse and in contrast to Western media coverage, which often labelled the country as an anarchic hell only salvageable by international aid workers and peacekeepers.<sup>42</sup> *Khat* is one of many such industries and networks whose impact on life and the conflict in Somalia remained unexplored in media coverage.

### **From Somalia to South-central: The Persistence of Black 'Ghetto' Discourses**

Media images and narratives of young, Somali men riding in weaponized 'technical' vehicles, carrying guns and chewing *khat* are significant not only for the way in which they present conditions in Somalia but also for the ways in which they 'refer' to other images and narratives of national significance to Americans during the early 1990s. *Khat*'s portrayal in the Somalia narrative echoes the ways in which drug trading and drug culture has often been associated with Western ghettoized youth. The ABC December 7, 1992 item makes these comparisons particularly clear. Two of the Somali men filmed for the ABC report wear hoods in a manner frequently associated with American 'ghetto' street culture. (See Image 13) Some of the apparently self-aware posing of the men for the camera recollects the aesthetic of best-selling rap music artists from the time period. Accompanying comments are also significant; the voiceover declares that: "Until the civil war they were mechanics, farmers, school kids. Now they

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<sup>42</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

earn up to \$200 a month as hired guards. They spend as much as half of that on *khat*...They say that *khat* makes them feel bold, more powerful. Youth, guns and *khat*—it's a lethal combination."<sup>43</sup> This comment could as easily come straight out of an American national media item, detailing the waste of inner-city lives in a dangerous culture of fast money and high risks. Any uncertainty or ambiguity about the effects of *khat* and its role as a trigger for male aggression, which is only highlighted in any depth in the single *New York Times* article, is swept aside in broad statements such as this one. There is little attempt to explore many of the underlying economic and social reasons for the existence of groups of young men and their destructive behaviour while the emphasis, instead, tends to be on violence, which is understood as senseless and irrational.

The next day, December 8, ABC's footage of the arrival of American troops at dawn showed images of Somali men lying prone on the ground as media spotlights were shone upon them. (See Image 14) The commentary explains that these men were guards for media organisations and at Mogadishu's port; they were mistakenly arrested by US Marines told to treat all Somalis as potentially hostile. The images themselves are reminiscent of footage from popular docu-dramas, such as *COPS* and *America's Most Wanted*, which follow various American police units on both daily routines and special-ops such as drug-busts. 'Criminal' apprehended individuals in these programs are often African American or non-white while police are primarily white. These images from Somalia also evoke images of the violent arrest of African American motorist, Rodney King, an event which provoked passionate and violent debate about race relations in the US. This event occurred in the year preceding the Somalia intervention, March 1991, with subsequent events reverberating in American national media months afterwards.

Despite evidence of numerous incidents of UN peacekeeper violence towards Somalis, the most notorious images to come out of Somalia illustrated white American bodies being beaten and put on display by groups of Somalis. These images revived

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<sup>43</sup> ABC news, December 7, 1992.

and were used to support what this section will show is a long-standing white anxiety about potential 'black' violence. The beating of white truck driver Reginald Denny during the uprisings in South-central Los Angeles following the trial verdicts in the Rodney King case provided support at the national level for these discourses of fear and racialized understandings of violence. The strength of these discourses and the ease with which they were used are particularly remarkable not necessarily with reference to the cases which confirm the stereotype, such as those mentioned above, but with the videotaped and supposedly 'obvious' case of a reverse situation of white-on-black violence, the case of Rodney King. The reinterpretation of Rodney King's beating from a shocking and offensive example of racism, which virtually no one on the American political spectrum could tolerate, to a case of the proper application of police practices against a potentially violent, brutal and drug-fuelled offender is relevant for understanding the ways in which Somali 'victims' could be re-conceptualized as people inherently prone to violence and suffering.

The setting of South-central Los Angeles in the late 1980s and early 1990s was already discursively compared, often by both 'sides' of the conflict, to the terrain of urban warfare, subterfuge and 'gang' style activities that later came to characterize media descriptions of Mogadishu, especially during the 1993 summer of the hunt for Aidid. Like many Mogadishu citizens, residents of South-central were subject to sudden 'search and destroy' missions. While the American Special Forces in Mogadishu hunted Aidid and his supporters, high-tech branches of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) aimed to eradicate drug-trading gangs occasionally referred to by local politicians and police officers as "the murderous militias of Beirut" and "the Viet Cong abroad in our society".<sup>44</sup> Similar politicized and racialized names were applied to Somali groups.

The extent to which urban, predominantly black areas were perceived as hostile spaces of violence and chaos, whether discussing South-central or Mogadishu outside the UN/US compound, was also made evident through geographic discourses. An

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<sup>44</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 268.

example is provided in a statement by the defence lawyer of LAPD officer Laurence Powell. In the first trial, he summed up the streets of South-central as “the jungle out there.”<sup>45</sup> In both cases, there were a variety of social, political and economic reasons for the problems faced by these areas. Much of Mogadishu’s infrastructure had been destroyed by some of the worst of the civil war fighting during the ousting of Siad Barre; the city was divided along factional lines and had no fully accepted governing bodies, making the creation of stable jobs and the provision of even basic necessities major challenges for residents. South-central had faced hundreds of thousands of job losses throughout the 1980s, as industry moved from the blue-collar sectors of the developed to the cheaper labour of the developing world. New immigrant groups to the region, such as Latinos and Koreans, largely replaced blacks in the remaining minimum wage jobs where they had been strongly represented. According to John Fiske, the fifty percent black male unemployment rate in South-central therefore did not appear to many living there to have been created by “the raceless free market, but by racism recoded into economics”.<sup>46</sup> In practical terms, both situations created little opportunity for employment outside of ‘informal’ industries, such as the drug trade or the looting and selling of aid supplies.

Both environments were fraught with tension which there had been little or no attempt to ease through non-violent means at the time of their uprisings. As mentioned above, Mogadishu residents had been subjected to routine American air attacks against buildings thought to house the fugitive Aidid or his supporters. These attacks had killed many uninvolved bystanders and created a high level of resentment towards US and UN forces. In several cases, Somali casualties were not acknowledged by UN personnel when reporting these incidents to Western media. No non-military organisation had been set up to deal with abuse complaints by Somali citizens against UN personnel in the country. Although some high profile cases of abuse against Somalis were made public after the bulk of the foreign intervention in Somalia was

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<sup>45</sup> John Fiske, *Media Matters: Race and Gender in US Politics* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 146.

<sup>46</sup> Fiske, *Media Matters*, 153.



over, Africa Watch director Alex De Waal has noted that very few trials and sentences were ever carried out.<sup>47</sup> These reports of abuse went almost completely uncovered by mainstream Western media, both at the time of the intervention and afterwards.<sup>48</sup>

Citizens in South-central had faced a difficult decade in the 1980s, as the growth of the crack cocaine trade had been used to justify increasingly violent police 'sweeps' through the neighbourhood. Both before and after the uprisings following the King verdict, many black men articulated their fear and hatred of the police where it was possible to do so, often through rap music but also through media which allowed their voices to be heard. They almost universally explained that these emotions had developed through regular incidents of harassment by police. For many African Americans, such harassment and suspicious treatment were not confined to police forces but extended into the job market, government and consumer spheres. The fatal shooting of South-central black teenager Latasha Harlins by a Korean shopkeeper, who was given a fine and public service sentence rather than jail time, was perceived by many African Americans across the US to be yet another example of the ways in which the American justice system did not produce justice for specific racial groups.<sup>49</sup>

The infamous Rodney King video was filmed on March 3, 1991, when, after a brief case, King was pulled over for speeding. King was confronted by twenty-one police officers from California Highway Patrol and the LAPD. In full view of all present, King was severely beaten by three white LAPD officers. The incident was recorded by a citizen witness, George Holliday, on a home video camera without the

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<sup>47</sup> Alex De Waal, "US War Crimes in Somalia", *New Left Review*, July (1998): 137. Also see the De Waal article for the more general information above on failures to acknowledge Somali casualties.

<sup>48</sup> An important exception to this statement, as noted by De Waal, is the beating death of Somali teenager, Shidane Arone at the hands of a regiment of Canadian peacekeepers. Arone's death prompted a major national trial and media investigation in Canada and resulted in the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, whose members were shown to have exhibited deeply disturbing racist and violent behaviour both in Somalia and at home in Canada, [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-71-723-4320/conflict\\_war/somalia/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-71-723-4320/conflict_war/somalia/) (accessed May 17, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> Fiske, *Media Matters*, 159. According to Fiske, video surveillance cameras in the store showed Harlins carrying a bottle of orange juice to the shop counter. Harlins and shop owner Soon Ja Du appear to have a verbal altercation. Du grabs Harlins's sweater and yells at her; Harlins hits Du three times in the head. Du throws a stool at Harlins. Harlins puts the bottle on the counter, turns and begins to walk away. Du pulls a gun from beneath the counter and fires. The bullet hits Harlins in the back of the head and kills her.

officers' realization and was sold to a local television station. This particular instance of police brutality was thus made visible to large audiences and rendered important, individual and significant "despite the fact that the city [of LA] paid more than \$20 million between 1986-90 in judgments, settlements and jury verdicts against Los Angeles police officers in over 300 lawsuits dealing with the excessive use of force."<sup>50</sup>

For the majority of African Americans in LA, such evidence was not needed to convince them that police brutality against blacks occurred; this was known already, often through personal experience. What created hope for many about the videotape was that it would satisfy 'the law' and white-dominated institutions that this violence indeed occurred.<sup>51</sup> Fiske highlights the politicization and contestation of the visual in this incident, along with the Denny beating and the shooting of Harlins; "(t)he trials were trials by and of video, of what each did and did not show, and of what meanings could and could not be made out of what it showed."<sup>52</sup>

New events in the build-up to the trial of the officers and discussion regarding historic racism and corruption in the LAPD were mainly told in mainstream media through narratives of romantic redemption. According to Ronald Jacobs, although different heroes and anti-heroes were chosen by various media the trial was presented as an event that would offer a cathartic conclusion to the horrors of the videotape. There was a clear expectation in most mainstream media that the officers would be found guilty and that the concerns of the African American community regarding police racism could be resolved through the law and 'normal' political channels.<sup>53</sup>

Much research surrounding the Rodney King trial has explored the ways this initial consensus on the 'horror' of the video was shaken and altered in court by a re-interpretation of the tape itself by the police officers' defence teams. For each of these

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<sup>50</sup> Ronald N. Jacobs, *Race, Media and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81.

<sup>51</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw & Gary Peller, "Reel Time/Real Justice" in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams, 65 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Fiske, *Media Matters*, 126.

<sup>53</sup> For information here and in above paragraph, see Jacobs, *Race, Media and the Crisis of Civil Society*, 17 & 84-105.

studies, conclusions were similar.<sup>54</sup> The defence's strategy involved breaking down the tapes into a series of still shots. The low-quality sound on the tape, where some racial and sexual slurs made by police officers could be heard, was removed altogether by the defence team and replaced with technocratic voiceover. Importantly, King was not present at the original trial and thus was not allowed to speak and respond for himself.

King was shown to have brought each level of police response onto himself through his own actions. What had originally appeared for many watching the tape as self-protective reactions to blows and the infliction of a fifty thousand watt Taser strike were frozen and isolated to become King's attempts to respond violently against police; "This discursive strategy puts Blacks in control of their own subordination through their control over the degree of their submissiveness, and erases white power and responsibility from the picture."<sup>55</sup> King's body itself was described alternately through gun metaphors, making his prone body into a potential weapon, and through references to his 'bear-like' qualities, evoking images of a huge, hunted and injured animal which might make a sudden desperate attempt to survive and injure its hunters.<sup>56</sup> While King later described his movements as actions he took "just trying to stay alive", a response that many African Americans could relate to, white jurors were led to different conclusions. According to a book chapter by Judith Butler, one juror was later to say that King had in fact "been in total control" of his entire beating. Such a dramatic shift in the reading of the King video relied on the defence's tapping into persistent currents of historic American racism:

The fear is that some physical distance will be crossed, and the virgin sanctity of whiteness will be endangered by that proximity. The police are thus structurally placed to protect whiteness against violence, where violence is the imminent action of that black male body. And because within this imaginary schema, the police protect whiteness, their own violence cannot be read as violence; because the black male body, prior to any video, is the site and source of danger, a threat, the

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<sup>54</sup> See Fiske, *Media Matters*; Gooding-Williams ed., *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*; and Jacobs, *Race, Media and the Crisis of Civil Society*.

<sup>55</sup> Fiske, *Media Matters*, 134.

<sup>56</sup> Gooding-Williams, "Look, a Negro!", 166.

police effort to subdue this body, even if in advance, is justified regardless of the circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

After the not-guilty verdicts were delivered, many in the South-central black community 'spoke' their rage and frustration at the verdicts through a variety of means, including the setting of fires and looting of stores in the South-central area. The verdicts shook the liberal mainstream media's belief in its own abilities to bring about reform; high public disapproval ratings of the verdict were reported alongside 'man on the street' interviews and the criticism of many experts and policymakers. Coverage of the 'uprisings' or 'riots', however, presented these events as unrelated to the King verdict. Jacobs explains that much media coverage approached the subject through the tragic genre; none of the 1960s issues of the urban black underclasses had been resolved; "Romance was undercoded throughout the crisis in all the news publics, encouraging a sense of tragic resignation, fatalism and, ultimately, inaction."<sup>58</sup> For Robert Gooding-Williams, neither the liberal nor the conservative interpretations of the uprisings dealt with the King issue. For conservatives, the 'rioting' was an act of "repressed opportunism just waiting for an excuse to flout the law"; the liberal view emphasized some social causes of the uprising. Like the conservative view, however, it did not see the rioting as having to do with moral indignation over the outcome of the King verdicts.<sup>59</sup> The 'rioting' was read as 'senseless' and 'chaotic' despite recorded and mediatized accounts of participants.

Participants, when asked, spoke of the targeting of specific businesses for looting and burning, the ethos of respect and helpfulness among 'looters', the many community members who did not loot but supported the actions, and the South-central community's need to be heard by whatever means necessary. While Oprah Winfrey stood out in her willingness to allow 'rioters' and 'looters' to speak on her television talk show program, her position while hosting the program was to equate the looting

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<sup>57</sup> Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia", in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams, 18 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs, *Race, Media and the Crisis of Civil Society*, 114.

<sup>59</sup> Gooding-Williams, "Look, a Negro!", 169.

with stealing and to see no possible reason for it. A black woman speaking on Winfrey's program expressed regret for the way in which Korean-American businesses had been targeted by looters but pressed the point that the uprisings had gained important national attention. "*We are here, we are here,*"<sup>60</sup> she insisted, likely referring not only to her own and other South-central residents' presence on national television but also alluding to the attention gained from white Americans because of the uprising's mediatization.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Rodney King story was its lack of long term impact on American race relations, at least in the discursive realm of political administration and policymaking. Cultural theorist Cornel West points out that the urban upheaval in LA was not mentioned at all during presidential debates later in 1992, illustrating in his mind how difficult it was to fit issues raised by the uprisings into existing political discourses. For West and many other intellectuals, neither the standard liberal model of inclusion nor the conservative model of merited acceptance of blacks into American society can be acceptable, for neither acknowledges that African Americans are not merely additions or detractors from 'America' but a constitutive element of American life.<sup>61</sup> In other terms, blacks must no longer be seen as a 'problem people' and their past and potential contributions to various aspects of American life must be viewed as relevant and valued. Gooding-Williams suggests that: "For many whites...black speech is not the speech of fellow citizens, but the always-complaining speech of spoiled children."<sup>62</sup>

This particular statement resonates with the tone of many media reports about Somalis, another group of disempowered black citizens, half a world away but also involved in confrontational relations with American authorities. In returning to narratives of Somalia, the American media experience of the Rodney King incident and uprisings can be used as an interesting comparative moment to explore continuities in

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<sup>60</sup> Extract from Fiske, *Media Matters*, 174.

<sup>61</sup> Cornel West, "Learning to Talk of Race", in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams, 256 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> Gooding-Williams, "Look, a Negro!", 170.

racialized images and narratives. Despite the fact that they originated from a profoundly different part of the world, visual and rhetorical strategies used to represent groups of 'black' people as violent and socially destructive were similar in stories about Somalis, particularly men, and Rodney King. Voicing-over specifically chosen images of black males allowed white producers control over how the images 'spoke'; older narratives which linked 'black' bodies to inherent violence and child-like tendencies were evoked. Various calls to recognise the 'truth' of image-based evidence actually ended up illustrating the possibilities for politicization and multiple readings of specific events.

In both cases, the use of the tragic genre of narrative works to minimize the social, economic and political context in which events occur. The tragedies of blacks acting out violently despite the 'reasonable' actions of predominately white American soldiers and police to do their jobs and in contravention of 'normal' laws and behaviour encourage simplistic interpretations of this hugely diverse 'group' of people as ungrateful, inherently violent and 'doomed' to their difficult situations. The extensive use of quotation marks in the previous sentences is deliberate to re-enforce the view that many of these categories of people and concepts are constantly contestable and fluid; their use is inevitably political. The above analysis is intended to emphasise the importance of the socio-economic and political spheres in which various identities are created and applied to certain groups. For the purposes of this work, it is the enduring nature of the 'blacks as violent and hopeless social group' narrative which is important to consider and challenge. As will be seen in the following section, as violence increased in Mogadishu after the attacks on Pakistani peacekeepers, residents were often represented as having provoked UN and American attacks by engaging in violent actions against UN troops. For Somalis, however, these attacks were understood in a dramatically different way, one which only increased animosity between the groups.

### **Warfare in Mogadishu: Somalis As Threat & Under Threat**

Initial reports regarding the June 1993 fighting between forces loyal to Aidid and the Pakistani peacekeepers were focused on recounting the events that had occurred and describing Western responses to these events. This approach emphasised quotes from UN and American policymakers rather than from most other involved parties in the attacks. From the beginning, therefore, concern over the impacts of increased tensions in Mogadishu was primarily focused on American and UN forces. The humanitarian role of these forces in Mogadishu was stated in the form of background information in many articles on the attacks, working to highlight the senselessness of such violence against those who had merely come to help Somalis.

The communications failures and frustrations of the intervention, which had led to growing Somali suspicion and resentment of foreign peacekeeping forces, were not often discussed in media items after the attacks, which were understood instead in terms of their strategy and benefits for the 'warlord' Aidid. The attacks were thus often seen as evidence of the renewed danger posed by factional Somali leaders as opposed to being investigated as a possible indication of the dissatisfaction and unease of Somali citizens with the UN intervention. Several weeks of 'hunting' for Aidid passed before Western media in Somalia began to question the appropriateness of these attacks; this questioning became consistent only after fractures appeared between key policymakers in the US and UN. While print journalism continued to cover events during the 'hunt for Aidid' with some regularity, television journalism decreased considerably, meaning that many Western citizens had little knowledge of the deteriorating situation in Mogadishu until it was largely unrecoverable.

*The New York Times'* June 6 report on the incident included the unofficial Pakistani casualty toll at that time, twenty-six killed and ten missing, but did also mention reports from Mogadishu's hospitals on numbers of Somali casualties, reported at twenty-three killed and over 100 wounded. The article described the fighting as occurring because of rumours amongst the Somali population that UN troops were planning to occupy Aidid's radio station and attacks involving several groups of UN

forces are said to have occurred throughout the capital afterwards.<sup>63</sup> No visual footage of the attacks themselves was aired. A June 6 BBC lead story on the events used voiceover with shots of armed Pakistani peacekeepers in vehicles to explain what was known about the story. Imagery of Somalis is confined to a brief image of Aidid in a crowd of cheering, mainly male supporters. No indication is given of when this shot was taken, but its use throughout later coverage suggests that it became a 'stock' image to represent the Somali leader.<sup>64</sup>

By June 7, the UN Security Council had condemned the attacks and published a report on them which called for the arrest and detention for prosecution, trial and punishment of those responsible. Aidid and his supporters were stated to be the prime suspects. The report immediately became a source of quotable statements for media; both newspapers highlighted the deliberateness of the fighting. According to *The New York Times*, quoting UN officials, it was a "'a calculated, premeditated series of major ceasefire violations' that were intended to 'challenge and intimidate' United Nations forces in Mogadishu."<sup>65</sup> Although Aidid was personally named as accountable for the attacks, descriptions of the fighting routinely mentioned the involvement of crowds of civilians at several different locations, hinting that civilian support for such actions could be easily found. Detailed description of the attacks in *The New York Times'* June 7 item described some Somalis as deliberately inciting crowds to violence during the UN inspections and noted that some weapons were found to be missing from the depots. Pakistani and Somali casualty figures vary across *The Times* and *The New York Times*, depending on whether the decision was made to include numbers killed and wounded on both sides or only one figure for each. This inclusion or exclusion can be used in a variety of ways to emphasize or downplay losses on either side. A still image accompanying the June 7 article showed a Somali boy tossing a muffler into the burned wreckage of a vehicle in Mogadishu, emphasizing the destructive nature of the fighting and the "lawlessness" of Mogadishu, which was described in a following article on

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<sup>63</sup> "26 UN Troops Reported Dead in Somalia Combat", *The New York Times*, June 6, 1993.

<sup>64</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, June 6, 1993.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Lewis, "UN Asks Arrests Of Somalia Killers", *The New York Times*, June 7, 1993.



June 8.<sup>66</sup> Similar images in February 1993 had showed violent, anti-US/UN demonstrations in Mogadishu, which were again said to have been encouraged by Aidid. Photos of these events in *The New York Times* are strongly reminiscent of LA riot images; a front page image on February 25, 1993 depicts a single black man running against a burning, urban background, again highlighting the state of 'chaos' Mogadishu has been reduced to by its own residents.

Despite Aidid's denials of any role in the battles, both newspapers suggested that these incidents delivered "a clear warning of things to come from Somali warlords"<sup>67</sup> and predicted continued tension in Mogadishu and retaliation from UN forces. Discourses and terminology which placed Somalis in the role of disobedient and ungrateful children were an occasional part of Western policymaking and media reported these comments. A June 15, 1993 *Times* article quotes a senior Washington official saying of Aidid and his forces: "We are going to smack them as they need to be smacked, hitting them as circumstances demand."<sup>68</sup>

Early television reports of the incident announced many of the same facts as the newspapers were reporting; however, the absence of Somali comment and 'reading' of the events was also made visually obvious. BBC's June 6 coverage of the events primarily featured sound bites from the UN officials in New York and images of Pakistani troops in non-combat situations.<sup>69</sup> On June 7, BBC news that two Somalis had died after being shot by Pakistanis was introduced using a still shot of a young Somali man in a black headscarf behind a large gun on the back of a truck. The only imagery of Somalis in the entire item showed four Somalis in brightly coloured dress running away from the camera through shrub and bits of destroyed buildings. Again, numerous shots are shown of Pakistani troops, mostly preparing defences against what are called "carefully planned attacks" by Somalis. A Pakistani general is interviewed and says that the trust his troops worked hard to build with Somalis is destroyed and

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<sup>66</sup> Donatella Lorch, "UN Moves Troops to Somali City and Vows Punishment for Attack", *The New York Times*, June 8, 1993.

<sup>67</sup> Sam Kiley & James Bone, "UN Moves to Crack Down on Somali Warlords", *The Times*, June 7, 1993.

<sup>68</sup> Sam Kiley, "Aidid Offers Talks As UN Rocket Injures Civilians", *The Times*, June 15, 1993.

<sup>69</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, June 6, 1993.

that UN troops are justified in being more cautious. The item ends with imagery of two Somali men seen attempting to fix an old military jeep; voiceover explains that the UN's current levels of weapons aren't enough to allow troops to respond adequately to potential Somali attacks and should be increased.<sup>70</sup> Although this item opens with a description of the shooting deaths of Somalis, the almost complete visual focus on Pakistani troops, along with the interview with their general, function to confer legitimacy and credibility with the Pakistanis. The primary Somali image in the item is one of a gunman, representative of nearly all major threats to international personnel and Somalis alike, rather than a civilian. Thus, a stated incident of violence *against* Somalis is represented with images of Somali aggression.

After the UN began to take retaliatory actions against parts of Mogadishu in an effort to forcibly weaken and disarm Aidid, images of Somalis became more common but the identification of Somalis as threats to UN troops also increased. On June 12, 1993, US forces launched air strikes as part of the UN's response to the killings of the Pakistanis. An ABC report on the strikes illustrates the bombings taking place with images of troops watching large explosions in the distance and with shots of helicopters in the air. General Montgomery, a key US military figure in Somalia, is quoted calling the attacks "extremely successful" and the item's narrative declares that they will be a "blow against lawlessness and killing". Although he was again said to be a key figure responsible for the violence, the item claims there are no plans to arrest Aidid, instead shots are shown of US troops with arrested Somali citizens on the backs of trucks. Angry Somali crowds, including women, are also portrayed setting up burning barricades; a dead Somali body is depicted, allegedly killed by UN troops. Voiceover explains that Somalis are demanding to know why the UN is attacking them.<sup>71</sup>

A BBC report on June 12 also initially highlighted the extent and scope of the air strikes and mentioned the taking of 200 prisoners in an attempt to destroy "criminal elements" in Somalia. Images of weapons and vehicles allegedly confiscated by UN

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<sup>70</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, June 7, 1993.

<sup>71</sup> ABC news, June 12, 1993.

forces are shown along with shots of Somali captives sitting under US guard and being moved on the backs of trucks. Like ABC, this item also calls these UN missions “successes”, but acknowledges that they were not popular with Somali citizens who must be kept supportive of the UN mission. Similar shots to those on ABC are shown but in greater depth; crowds of demonstrating women, men and children are imaged ducking for cover and shots are heard. An injured woman is shown being dragged away and is said to have died later in hospital.<sup>72</sup> (See Images 15i and 15ii)

The issue of UN forces shooting at crowds alleged to be peaceful demonstrators recurred for several days in television coverage, probably because of the continuation of the air strikes. BBC’s June 13 nightly news program opened with this issue; the initial image in the report shows Somalis carrying an injured person to safety. Images of dead Somali bodies are also shown later in the item.<sup>73</sup> ABC’s June 14 news program also included immediate footage of a demonstrating crowd. Somalis yell at the filming camera as they drag a victim to safety and images of a charred body along with dead and injured are shown.<sup>74</sup> In both cases, the footage is taken under tense conditions and appears shaky and slightly blurred at times, emphasizing the dangers of the situation and, by extension, the dangers of Somali streets and those on them. No shots are shown of UN troops firing at Somalis, although audiences are told that this has occurred. Voiceover is used in both cases, rather than any interview footage with Somali civilians or leaders.

While they do not provide Somali civilians with a place for any comment on events, these items hint at the differing interpretations of the Aidid-capture mission by Somalis and UN and US forces. For Somalis living in Aidid-controlled areas of Mogadishu, the air strikes appeared to be aimed not only at Aidid but also at them. Although UN rhetoric stressed that the air strikes were geared only at destroying Aidid’s weapons stores, the strikes lacked the desired precision and resulted in civilian deaths and further infrastructure destruction. For many UN policymakers in Somalia,

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<sup>72</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, June 12, 1992.

<sup>73</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, June 13, 1992

<sup>74</sup> ABC news, June 14, 1993.

success or failure of the mission in Somalia had become tied to the capture of Aidid. Somali citizens were an ongoing source of problems to which they no longer knew how to respond. The situation became especially difficult as Somali 'threats' to troops increasingly appeared not simply classifiable as young men on jeeps with guns but as all members of the population.

The re-inscription of the entire Somali population as 'threat' was made even clearer in the print coverage of both newspapers. Television coverage does not deal with this issue explicitly but, as mentioned above, does show mixed crowds of Somali men, women and children as participants in anti-UN demonstrations. On June 8, an article in *The Times* referenced the commander of the Pakistani troops explaining that his men had "been pinned down when they came under attack from three sides in a well-organised ambush. They had been unable to return fire because of the shield of women and children."<sup>75</sup> A June 14, 1993 *New York Times* article confirmed this perspective, arguing that on June 5 Pakistanis had been killed because they were shot at "from behind a screen of women and children."<sup>76</sup>

After these events, Pakistani troops in particular but also UN troops in general were said to consider any crowd of Somalis as a potential threat, raising tension during the already minimal amount of time that troops interacted with Somali citizens. The declaration by several key policymakers and by media outlets that women and children were being used as 'human shields' left ambiguous the issue of whether these shields were willing participants in the fighting or not. While there was acknowledgement, particularly in print coverage, that Somali demonstrations were linked to anger about UN bombings, the involvement of women and children in the fighting threatened to turn a number of those who had been previously seen as 'victims' of the Somali conflict into combatants and threats. At the very least, this practice was cited to suggest that Aidid's forces were using 'guerrilla' and 'terrorist' tactics to fight the UN. A *New York Times* article on June 20, 1993 points out that the 'human shield' approach "exploit(s)

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<sup>75</sup> Sam Kiley & James Bone, "UN Forces Come Under Renewed Attack in Somalia", *The Times*, June 8, 1993.

<sup>76</sup> Eric Schmitt, "US Expresses Regret At Shooting Of Somalis", *The New York Times*, June 14, 1993.

the unwillingness of the United Nations soldiers to open fire on civilians<sup>77</sup>, allowing much smaller Somali forces to inflict losses on better-armed UN and US troops.

Other brutal tactics used by Aidid's Somali forces, such as torture and mutilation of bodies, were also occasionally hinted at, primarily in print stories which routinely went into greater depth than television items. A *New York Times* article on June 17, while mentioning the numbers of Pakistani casualties, adds that "many of the dead Pakistanis were mutilated"<sup>78</sup> without any further detail. This statement is further elaborated in Lorch's June 20, 1993 item: "On June 5, when a wounded Pakistani captain was captured by Mr. Aidid's men, they mutilated him while he was still alive, said Lieut. Brian McInerney, the United States Army liaison officer with the Pakistanis."<sup>79</sup> While no further mention was made of mutilation at this point, this issue was to return with the downing of Black Hawk helicopters later.

Media coverage of Somalia from June 1993 onwards was reduced almost exclusively to Aidid-hunting events in Mogadishu. On September 10, a particularly violent event occurred when UN troops, including a contingent of US forces, were attacked while trying to clear a roadblock. According to Maj. David Stockwell, the chief UN spokesman in Mogadishu, Pakistani and American forces were justified in opening fire on the crowds, including women and children; "'We saw all the people swarming on the vehicles as combatants,' he was quoted as saying in news agency reports. 'We've seen this before. If they reach our soldiers they tear them limb from limb.'"<sup>80</sup> This comment recalls statements made earlier about the brutality of Somali fighters and the alleged mutilation of Pakistani bodies in June. The article also discusses the issue of whether some women in the mixed crowds of civilians and fighters should be considered "armed collaborators" rather than as angry civilians. The article ends with a

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<sup>77</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Aidid's Forces Still Strong, UN Aides in Somalia Say", *The New York Times*, June 20, 1993.

<sup>78</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Somali Clan Chief Poses Tough Problem for UN", *The New York Times*, June 17, 1993.

<sup>79</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Aidid's Forces Still Strong, UN Aides in Somalia Say", *The New York Times*, June 20, 1993.

<sup>80</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "US Troops Fire on Somalis; Death Toll May Reach 100", *The New York Times*, September 10, 1993. Further Stockwell comments to this effect were published in *The Times*- Sam Kiley, "UN Attack on Somali Women and Children Leaves 100 Dead", September 10, 1993.

description of the American Congress' push to remove US troops from Somalia. The new legislative consensus appeared to be that Somalis could not be worked with politically and that continued involvement in the country risked American deaths, which were worth more than those of Somalis.

The first downing of a Black Hawk helicopter in late September built on already existing narratives and images of dangerous Somali threats in urban Mogadishu and ended up being an example of things to come. On September 26, 1993 both newspapers reported the downing of a US helicopter, along with claims that "jubilant" crowds of Somalis danced around the wreckage holding pieces of metal, burnt human flesh and a charred torso.<sup>81</sup> The Pentagon's insistence that the remains of the American soldiers had been safely recovered was recognised in both stories yet this corrective information did not alter the sense of Somali 'barbarity' suggested by the incident. A photo accompanying the article in *The New York Times* showed Somalis holding up a piece of an American helicopter but the caption also mentioned that Somalis claimed to be holding burnt flesh as well. UN spokesman Maj. Stockwell, quoted in another *New York Times* article, was unable to confirm the rumours of body parts being paraded one way or another but declared that: "If they are bragging and boasting, if it's true, then these people are barbaric and animalistic."<sup>82</sup>

While *The New York Times* mentioned the pull-out of many aid and media organisations from Mogadishu because of high levels of threat, a *Times* article by Paul Watson during this period focused on the story of a single US Marine to illustrate defiance against Somali violence. Major Mike Collier, known to be especially tough on Somali gunmen, describes his adversaries in dismissive terms: "'These guys...they're fighting for money,' he said. 'We are US Marines willing to die for a cause. All they understand and respect is intimidation and brute force.'"<sup>83</sup> Collier's failure to recognise

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<sup>81</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Hunted Somali General Lashes Out", *The New York Times*, September 26, 1993 and Paul Watson, "UN's Big Tobacco Becomes Somalia's Most Wanted Man", *The Sunday Times*, September 26, 1993.

<sup>82</sup> Eric Schmitt, "US Vows to Stay in Somalia Force Despite An Attack", *The New York Times*, September 26, 1993.

<sup>83</sup> Paul Watson, "UN's Big Tobacco Becomes Somalia's Most Wanted Man", *The Sunday Times*, September 26, 1993.

any underlying rationality or 'cause' for the Somalis' anger and his downplaying of Somali capabilities taps into broader issues of American overconfidence in their technological and strategic advantages over Somalis. While Somalis were acknowledged to be a threat on the streets of Mogadishu, the American sense of security in its air advantage meant that, while Somalis were viewed as destructive to peace-building and the lives of some UN personnel, they were not yet seen as a serious danger to many American lives. (See Image 16)

Although he is slightly caricatured in the article as a gone-native cowboy figure, Collier nevertheless emerges from the article as an individual of commitment, in his own words, to the safety of Somali children, while the Somalis themselves appear random, brutal and unorganised. They are primarily portrayed by Western interveners and media coverage as 'urban guerrillas', 'terrorists' and 'rag-tag militias'. Somalis' unifying sentiment of anti-UN and American feeling, tied as it was into much older currents of anti-colonialism, was not taken seriously until many more lives had been lost on both sides.

### **'Black Hawk Down': Images of 'Savagery' & Ungratefulness**

Seen through this chronology, the events of 'Black Hawk down' merely confirmed what many Western media consumers would already have been encouraged to believe. Somalia was a region in total disarray, populated by selfish warlords who would not 'reasonably' negotiate and by a brutal population, including women and children, who readily attacked those who came to help them. Although other alternatives to this scenario were available, especially in print coverage, the media's interest in the Somalia story had not been consistent throughout 1993; consequently many media readers and viewers were only to 'return' to Somalia as a result of the circulation of the controversial and powerful 'Black Hawk down' images.

The full-scale of the 'Black Hawk down' incident was not apparent for many hours after the crashes and fighting. The release of the images was a key factor. On October 4, ABC showed what it labelled German video footage of Somalis applauding

as bodies of US troops were dragged through dusty streets; ABC reported twelve killed, seventy-eight wounded and twelve missing.<sup>84</sup> Paul Watson, a *Toronto Star* reporter who had been able to capture some of the images, narrated over the footage: "I saw one [body] being pulled by ropes for about 10 minutes. A second body, burnt beyond recognition, was being pulled by small crowds of children."<sup>85</sup> Images of Somali women and children are shown smiling at the US bodies at this point. BBC's October 5 footage also showed extensive footage of Somali crowds beating the downed helicopter wreckage. A white body described as that of an American pilot is also shown being dragged along a dirt road; children chase the body and jump and play on the helicopter wreckage.<sup>86</sup> In both cases, these images are immediately contrasted with close-ups of captured pilot Mike Durant, looking beaten and nervous. The juxtaposition of the dragged bodies, whose faces are not visible, with the isolated face of Durant works to individualise and humanize the dead, missing, and kidnapped American troops. The Somalis are described as a "mob" in BBC coverage. (See Images 17i, ii, iii and 18)

*Times* coverage echoed this sentiment in an October 5 article, commenting that Somalis were "gloating" and "parading" the corpses.<sup>87</sup> *The New York Times* described events in more 'neutral' language, only mentioning Somalis "watching" as a US soldier's body was dragged through the street with rope. The paper showed an image of this scene on its front page, along with a screen capture of Durant's face on a later page, on October 5, 1993.<sup>88</sup> In a further article that day, a photo appeared of Somalis displaying camouflage trousers they claimed belonged to a dead US soldier. This particular emphasis on American troops as individuals and on Somali citizens as an 'evil' "mob" was also evident in Ridley Scott's blockbuster film interpretation of the events. As Debbie Lisle and Andrew Pepper suggest in their work on the film: "Set against the well-meaning and disciplined US forces are hoards of ill-disciplined, gun-

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<sup>84</sup> ABC news, October 4, 1993.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> BBC 9 o'clock news, October 5, 1993.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Fletcher & Eve-Ann Prentice, "Gloating Somalis Parade Corpses of US Servicemen", *The Times*, October 5, 1993.

<sup>88</sup> R.W. Apple Jr., "Clinton Sending Reinforcements After Heavy Losses in Somalia", *The New York Times*, October 5, 1993.



toting Somalis cast in none-too-subtle terms as marauding savages.”<sup>89</sup> With only a few exceptions, Somali characters in the film are unidentified. They function as unspecified enemies for American forces to attack and be attacked by; they routinely appear accompanied by ‘ethnic’ music, without any dialogue.

The dragging images were quickly deemed to be too disturbing for mainstream viewing and images of the dragged bodies were not shown again on BBC 9 o’clock news after October 5. After their initial October 4 showing on ABC, the only subsequent coverage on this station which showed the dragging images was a late-night *Nightline* special programme on the ‘Black Hawk down’ events. If this decision was based on issues of good-taste it would be contestable, given that images had been regularly shown of dead Somalis who had died during the famine, been killed in Somali fighting or by UN forces. Media censoring of the footage was likely based on fears that American families might recognise their missing loved ones.

Discussions regarding Somali citizens in the aftermath of ‘Black Hawk down’ were minimal; much media interest was instead devoted to predicting the future of the UN mission and to policy critiques and tributes to lost loved ones by relatives of American soldiers killed in the incident. While the numbers of dead and wounded American troops were established within a few hours of the event, Somali casualties were difficult to pinpoint and thus took time to be reported. Red Cross estimates released by *The New York Times* on October 6, 1993 suggested anywhere from 500 to 700 Somalis had been killed, as the bulk of the fighting had taken place in a heavily-populated area of south Mogadishu.<sup>90</sup> By October 14, a figure of 300 killed had been settled on, with up to 700 treated in hospitals; one third of the victims were women and children.<sup>91</sup> A single *New York Times* article on December 8, 1993 made an attempt to discover the number of Somali casualties inflicted by both the hunt for Aidid and the

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<sup>89</sup> Debbie Lisle and Andrew Pepper, “The New Face of Global Hollywood: *Black Hawk Down* and the Politics of Meta-Sovereignty”, *Cultural Politics* 1, is. 2 (2005): 174.

<sup>90</sup> Donatella Lorch, “The Somalia Mission; Somali General Denounces Further Peace Talks”, *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993.

<sup>91</sup> John H. Cushman Jr., “Death Toll About 300 in Oct. 3 US-Somali Battle”, *The New York Times*, October 14, 1993.

'Black Hawk down' events. Robert Oakley and Maj. Gen. Anthony Zinni, after talks with Aidid and rival clans, estimated that there were between 6,000 and 10,000 Somali casualties in the four month period of the manhunt; "General Zinni said that two-thirds of the casualties were women or children, many of whom were used as shields by militia fighters, and that a vast majority occurred in southern Mogadishu, General Aidid's stronghold."<sup>92</sup> While the October 6, 1993 *New York Times* article quoted Maj. Stockwell as calling the displaying of American bodies "very barbaric", *New York Times* coverage turned almost immediately to the American foreign policy implications of the incident. Polls appeared to show that Americans were not interested in exacting violent revenge on Somalis but merely wanted to leave the country to deal with its own problems. Several *New York Times* articles quoted Aidid urging Somalis to defend themselves against "colonialism", but this quote tended to be cited without much or any further interpretation.

Media interest in 'Black Hawk down' had been overwhelmingly focused on the incident's implications for American multilateralism and the future of UN peacekeeping. Somali people were spoken about and reported on but conditions in the country were generally portrayed as insolvable by the UN; the renewed military activities of factional leaders such as Aidid were viewed cynically as evidence of Somalis' 'natural' tendencies to violence. The UN, largely influenced by the political mood in the US, had made it clear that it would do nothing to interfere with factional fighting. According to an October 29, 1993 article in *The New York Times*, "bitterness (was) evident". "'If the Somalis want warlords, they can have warlords,' the senior United Nations official said."<sup>93</sup> Increasingly, the Western world was positioned as a tired parent giving up on a delinquent and ungrateful child. Coverage of Somalia in *The Times* plummeted in November 1993; *New York Times* coverage was significantly decreased and overwhelmingly cynical. A November 1, 1993 photograph in the paper

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<sup>92</sup> Eric Schmitt, "Somali War Casualties May Be 10,000", *The New York Times*, December 8, 1993.

<sup>93</sup> Donatella Lorch, "Tensions Are Rising in Somalia Amid Fears of Renewed Civil War", *The New York Times*, October 29, 1993.

illustrated Somali men brandishing weapons<sup>94</sup> and a November 29 article reported that Aidid was rearming his militias and unwilling to participate in UN-sponsored Somali peace talks.<sup>95</sup>

Television coverage of Somalia also plummeted after 'Black Hawk down' had been reported. In a sense, after the controversial pictures of dragged American bodies were shown and then self-censored there was little new imagery to display. On October 10, 1993, crowd shots were used on both BBC and ABC to illustrate the relief of Somali citizens over the reopening of peaceful negotiations with Aidid's faction. The imagery was similar to that of 'violent' demonstrations but without the sound of gunfire. Voiceover was required to make clear that such displays were 'positive' actions; for Western audiences it was likely difficult to understand the banners and chants seen in the footage. By October 25, ABC was televising scenes which were equally reminiscent of times before 'Black Hawk down'. Women and children were shown assisting gunmen said to be loyal to Aidid after the one and a half year ceasefire in Mogadishu collapsed. This report then moved to Somali refugee camps in northern Kenya, showing lines of people waiting near roughly built houses and tents, recalling earlier media coverage of famine and civil disruption.

Such images worked to reinforce themes of intrinsic violence and failure that had been prevalent throughout the media coverage of Somali people. The voiceover declared that three hundred thousand Somalis are "helpless refugees from a hopeless homeland"<sup>96</sup>, tying all Somalis irrevocably to their 'failed state'. The devastation and civilians deaths inflicted upon Mogadishu by the hunt for Aidid, rarely depicted or discussed in media coverage to begin with, had now vanished from media narratives. Just as these reasons for Somali anger with UN and US forces were absent from Western public view, so too were many of the positive developments occurring in other areas of the country. Factors which would have complicated or challenged representations of Somali citizens as 'doomed' to suffering and violence were thus

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<sup>94</sup> "Tensions On Eve of Envoy's Arrival in Somalia", *The New York Times*, November 1, 1993.

<sup>95</sup> "Aidid's Attendance At Aid Talks Is Tied to Backers' Release", *The New York Times*, November 29, 1993.

<sup>96</sup> ABC news, October 25, 1993.

absent from media narratives and imagery of Somalia, leaving this state's population within its now-familiar binaries of feminised victim and masculine aggressor.

### **Aidid: 'The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse'**

Despite frequent media discussion of 'anarchy' in Somalia, as in most other war narratives 'heroes' and 'villains' were used to structure the situation for Western audiences. Mohammed Farah Aidid quickly came to be understood as an uncooperative figure for UN negotiators and intervening troops. Aidid was the military leader of the Somali National Alliance, the Somali political and factional group which had overthrown Siad Barre's forces. By the summer of 1993, he had become "the man who makes Somalia worse", "a megalomaniac who lusts for power and who believes that since he was the leader of the armed forces who ousted Mohammed Siad Barre, the former dictator, he should have been anointed as the country's leader."<sup>97</sup> The designation of Aidid as the prime obstructor of peace in Somalia became especially pronounced after his alleged ordering of the June 1993 attacks on Pakistani UN peacekeepers. After this event, media coverage of Somalia became reduced almost completely to the urban space of Mogadishu and to the UN manhunt for Aidid, which was to leave so many Somali citizens and UN troops dead and wounded.

While he was not caricatured, imaged or discussed to the extent of other 'third world dictators' deemed to be threats to Westerners and to their own people, media representations of Aidid link him to this Orientalist lineage, with the discursive contradictions that it entails. Portrayals of Aidid fit especially well with Anne Norton's descriptions of "(t)he particular form of masculinity ascribed to Arab men in general, and to the holders of Arab power in particular, [which] emphasizes violence. Arab 'strongmen' and 'madmen' are identified with the making of war and the sponsorship of terrorism, with military rule, and with the violent repression of dissent."<sup>98</sup> Aidid's

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<sup>97</sup> Steven A. Holmes, 'The World; The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse', *The New York Times*, August 15, 1993.

<sup>98</sup> Anne Norton, "Gender, Sexuality and the Iraq of Our Imagination", *Middle East Report*, November-December (1991): 26. Norton suggests that these assumptions are not limited to Arabs and that threatening

successes against far stronger UN forces were discursively minimised through comments about his use of 'terrorist' tactics, such as involving women and children in his attacks and using Mogadishu's urban architecture to his benefit. (See Image 19) These comments implied that Aidid had 'won' due to his willingness to use violence against his own people; they failed to recognise his successful use of his own narratives of anti-colonialist struggle, which became a rallying cry to many Mogadishu Somalis who had become disillusioned with the UN intervention in their country. The US and the UN quickly walked away from Somalia with comments which indicated their disgust and frustration with Somalis', but particularly with Aidid's, irrationality, greed and violence. The large amounts of new American military planning and design which followed the 'Black Hawk down' events in Mogadishu, however, illustrate the extent to which this particular "tin-horned dictator"<sup>99</sup> had influenced American military strategies for the twenty-first century.

As the conflict in Somalia began to filter into media coverage in January 1992, Aidid emerged as one of two Somali factional leaders battling for control of Mogadishu after the ousting of Siad Barre. His opponent was Ali Mahdi Mohamed, another key member of the Somali National Alliance in the political, rather than military, wing of the party. Ali Mahdi was labelled "interim president" of Somalia in several early articles on the conflict despite the fact that he controlled only a small section of north Mogadishu.<sup>100</sup> As the horrible conditions in Somalia were outlined throughout the spring of 1992, Aidid was repeatedly described as "leader of one of the warring factions, who still opposes a cease-fire and outside mediation."<sup>101</sup> This contrast works to emphasize Aidid's indifference to Somalis' suffering; since Somalis died because of fighting prompted by forces under his command. Some articles in *The Times* also

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masculinity can also be applied to Muslim Persians as well. I would additionally extend this suggestion to Somalis (African Muslims) and link it to violent portrayals of African men.

<sup>99</sup> From a comment made by California Democrat Diane Feinstein. Aired on ABC *Nightline*, October 5, 1993.

<sup>100</sup> For example, see Jane Perlez, "As Fighting In Somalia Rages On, African Neighbor Seeks a Truce", *The New York Times*, January 6, 1992.

<sup>101</sup> Paul Lewis, "Security Council To Pledge to Stop Global Aggression", *The New York Times*, January 24, 1992.

portrayed opposition to UN intervention as a sign of distrustful and reckless behaviour and recognised the claims of those who did support it. Ali Mahdi, who was said to be among the few clan leaders supporting international intervention in Somalia, was labelled "President" by this publication as well.<sup>102</sup> In July 1992, as word of the desperate famine conditions in parts of Somalia was spread through the media, Aidid was shown to be directly responsible for delaying the arrival of fifty UN observers to Mogadishu. Aidid was said to have "complained that a United Nations plane flew money to his chief opponent". UN spokespeople are quoted denying the incident while, interspersed between Aidid's refusal and this denial of the incident, Red Cross estimates of possible famine deaths are outlined.<sup>103</sup> Again, Aidid is positioned as deliberately blocking altruistic Western attempts to care for his own people.

As violence against aid workers and the looting of aid convoys were more frequently discussed in the media during the autumn of 1992, the contrasts between Ali Mahdi and Aidid continued. More media were now on the ground in Somalia and there was more time and space to define the parameters of the conflict. Although both major factional leaders are described as having to perform the same delicate balancing act to maintain the loyalty of their disparate followers, Aidid is labelled "a Soviet-trained military officer who lays claim to being the rightful leader of Somalia" while Ali Mahdi is called "a mild-mannered hotelier who goes by the title Interim President of Somalia".<sup>104</sup> Not only is Ali Mahdi made to sound more personally appealing than Aidid, but his claim to the leadership of Somalia is again rendered more legitimate by the use of his self-bestowed title. Aidid, meanwhile, is someone who "lays claim" to the presidency but his legitimacy and case for doing so are never explained. A similar article in *The Times* in December 1992 which features short descriptions of the two main contenders for leadership of Somalia calls Aidid "a rangy man in his sixties with shifty,

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<sup>102</sup> Sam Kiley, "UN Observer Team Arrives In Somalia to Mixed Reception", *The Times*, July 6, 1992.

<sup>103</sup> Jane Perlez, "UN Observers Delay Visit to Somalia", *The New York Times*, July 12, 1992.

<sup>104</sup> Jane Perlez, "Chaotic Somalia Starves As Strongmen Battle", *The New York Times*, October 4, 1992.

distrustful eyes” while Ali Mahdi has the “glib tongue of a service industry professional” and is called “a short and affable character”.<sup>105</sup>

Such categorizations, though often appearing minimal and trivial, nonetheless established a particular understanding of Aidid from early on in the conflict. It was speculated by *The New York Times* that Aidid had accepted the American intervention proposal because he was at a moment of political and military weakness in Somalia and hoped to gain American sympathy. Such an action was likely to be understood, given existing characterizations of Aidid, as evidence of a crafty change in approach to achieve his own personal ends. Aidid’s gesture was called “uncharacteristically conciliatory”, given that he had “threatened to send United Nations troops home in body bags”.<sup>106</sup>

Although armed gunmen were part of all the major factional groups involved in the Somali conflict, their particular association with Aidid was important as these groups were considered responsible for much of the suffering of the Somali population. As television coverage of Somalia increased dramatically with the announcement that American troops would lead a large scale intervention, the gangs were given more media time and were usually linked with imagery of Aidid. A December 7, 1992 ABC report opened with a montage of US jets flying over presumed Somali air space; then images of Aidid were followed by video of injured men lying on hospital beds and *khat*-chewing young men on Somali streets. Aidid was thus visually linked to the social disorder of Somalia. BBC footage from December 8, 1992 showed Ali Mahdi embracing and shaking hands with American diplomat, Robert Oakley. Aidid was shown several shots later, surrounded by microphones. He announces his cooperation with the US mission by explaining that he has asked armed Somalis not to go near the port and airport, which were to be secured by US forces. Aidid’s association with and ability to command Somali gunmen is illustrated in this clip. A December 4, 1992 BBC item also features shots of stockpiled food unable to be delivered, according to voiceover,

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<sup>105</sup> “How the Factional Warlords Line Up”, *The Times*, December 2, 1992.

<sup>106</sup> Jane Perlez, “US Plan To Guard Convoys Is Backed By Somali General”, *The New York Times*, November 28, 1992.

because of the risks of gunmen on the streets; it then cuts immediately to images of Aidid walking with what appeared to be armed guards. The voiceover commentary explains that warlords like Aidid are welcoming US and UN troops despite blocking aid in the past because they figure the “power game” can now be better played with “words rather than weapons”. An Aidid spokesperson explains Aidid’s desire for the intervening troops to stay only long enough to distribute food and to eliminate the gangs who loot the aid.<sup>107</sup>

Despite frequent reminders of his ties to aid-looting gunmen, December 1992 also represented a high point in Aidid’s media representation, albeit from a very low start. Aidid’s agreement to the intervention of foreign troops in Somalia did allow him to be presented as slightly more cooperative. During the December 8, 1992 Marine landing special on ABC, Ted Koppel referred to Aidid as a “self-appointed general”, mentioning that “warlord” was no longer an appropriate term and that “regional leader” was also acceptable. The comment was also made that Aidid’s son lived in the US and was himself a US Marine; confirmation of whether this son was participating in the Somalia intervention was not given in the report.<sup>108</sup> Aidid’s agreement to a ceasefire with Ali Mahdi and their willingness to send gunmen out of Mogadishu and to store heavy weapons at monitored depots also won both leaders some favourable media coverage. A December 11, 1992 report on BBC shows Ali Mahdi and Aidid walking from a building together, smiling and shaking hands to visually confirm this deal.

This mildly positive coverage did not last long. By January 13, 1993, *The Times* reported the first UN troop death in Somalia and also reported that peace talks in Addis Ababa were stalled because Aidid was demanding special privileges. On February 25, 1993, violent demonstrations against UN peacekeepers broke out in Mogadishu, incited by Aidid because of attacks against his troops by rival forces in the southern city of Kismayu. A February 25, 1993 article in *The New York Times* credited American forces

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<sup>107</sup> BBC 9 o’clock news, December 4, 1992.

<sup>108</sup> Aidid’s son, Hussein Aidid, did participate in the UNITAF mission to Somalia in 1992. He describes his involvement in Somalia to Mark Bowden in an American ‘History Channel’ documentary entitled *The True Story of Black Hawk Down*.



for their restraint and characterised the incident as a “show of strength” by Aidid, suggesting that more violence was likely to follow.<sup>109</sup> *The Times* bemoaned these events as illustrating the “powerlessness of the international community to bring order to growing chaos in Africa”.<sup>110</sup> In both cases, Aidid was associated with ‘havoc’, ‘rioting’ and general destruction in Mogadishu, which was described in depth in the February 25 *New York Times* article. The article also illustrated Aidid’s reversal from denouncing to praising foreign troops once American forces drove his rival to withdraw from Kismayu. It was this capriciousness which American diplomat Robert Oakley appeared to be criticizing a few days later with his March 3, 1993 comments about Somalis being “petulant children” who had “relied on the dole” for too long. This particular incident set the stage for worsening relations between Aidid and US/UN forces, an animosity clearly evident by the time of the June 1993 attacks on Pakistani peacekeepers.

The immediate blaming of Aidid for the June 5 killings of the Pakistanis meant that he remained a key ‘villain’ figure in Western media coverage after this incident. His skilful eluding of American efforts to capture him only added to the drama of the media storyline following the attacks. By June 17, 1993, *The New York Times* was quoting several US and UN officials saying that only Aidid’s arrest could bring about peace in Somalia.<sup>111</sup> The article reviewed Aidid’s past criminal actions and mentioned the mutilation of Pakistani bodies to emphasize the savage nature of Aidid’s supporters’ attacks and confirm his assigned place as among the worst, if not the worst, of the warlords. Both newspapers, however, acknowledged the already contradictory nature of UN and US policy towards Aidid. While President Clinton declared the air strikes against Aidid’s weapons depots “over” and said that Aidid’s arrest was not a priority, open-ended military action against Aidid continued across Mogadishu and

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<sup>109</sup> Diana Jean Schemo, “Rioting By Warlord’s Supporters Creates Havoc in Somali Capital”, *The New York Times*, February 25, 1993.

<sup>110</sup> Sam Kiley, “Mogadishu Clashes Threaten to Delay Pullout By Marines”, *The Times*, February 27, 1993.

<sup>111</sup> Donatella Lorch, “Somali Clan Chief Poses Tough Problem for UN”, *The New York Times*, June 17, 1993.

attempts to kill or capture him were ongoing.<sup>112</sup> Aidid made the most of his continued freedom, giving press conferences at which he portrayed Somalis as victims and accused the UN of being colonisers. He also visited wounded Somalis in hospital and held rallies, refraining from responding militarily to stronger UN and US forces.

Despite his occasional, impromptu press conferences, television footage of Aidid was limited during this time. BBC coverage of the attacks on the Pakistanis on June 6, 1993 presented the most shots of Aidid, in crowds of mainly male, gun-wielding supporters. All the images are fairly similar and several appear to be older, archived footage. In the first image, Aidid is shown kissing the hands of children who approach him while in the third and final image he appears to address a rally from a balcony. A June 17, 1993 *New York Times* article also includes a still image of Aidid addressing supporters at a rally protesting UN military strikes. ABC footage of Aidid was minimal; a June 14, 1993 item features shots of Aidid surrounded by Western press to whom he describes the UN strikes on Somalis as “terrorist attacks” but otherwise footage is focused on Somali civilian protesters and on discussions with Western experts and aid workers. The abovementioned shots are strongly reminiscent of other ‘dictator’ imagery, especially given the recent Gulf War footage of Saddam Hussein in 1990 and 1991. Hussein was routinely imaged firing a gun on a balcony during a public rally and famously had himself filmed with women and children hostages, perhaps an attempt to present himself as kind and reasonable. This gesture backfired and produced moral outrage in the West; McKenzie Wark argues that when Westerners were prevented from understanding Hussein through the discourse of ‘Arab fundamentalist’ he was instead presented through the other Orientalist extreme, the decadent pederast.<sup>113</sup> Aidid was not so explicitly associated with either of these stereotypes, although some Western experts and a few media items did speculate that he could ally himself with militant Islamic groups should it benefit him personally.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “US Intensifies Attack to Oust a Somali Clan”, *The New York Times*, June 17, 1993.

<sup>113</sup> McKenzie Wark, *Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>114</sup> Donatella Lorch, “Italian Forces Come Under Fire in Tense Somalia”, *The New York Times*, July 17, 1993.

Like Hussein, however, Aidid was regularly represented as a violent and selfish leader, with personal ambitions which had little to do with the good of his own people. Any supporters Aidid was shown to have were routinely linked to the violence, aggression and greed associated with him personally.

As UN/US strikes against Aidid increased in mid-June 1993, the rhetoric against him also accelerated; this was especially noticed in print and ABC television coverage. A June 17, 1993 ABC item showed reporter Ron Allen standing in Aidid's destroyed headquarters as a manhunt for the warlord was announced by Admiral Howe. Aidid was called a "threat to the safety of Somalis and the international community" by Howe. Boutros-Ghali marked the UN's entry into local political disputes when he was quoted calling Aidid a "power hungry warlord responsible for killing and starving to death hundreds of thousands of Somalis"; Ted Koppel's voiceover explained that the UN had bombed and then occupied Aidid's headquarters, as it was no longer willing to "tolerate his behaviour".<sup>115</sup> The strong discursive coverage trend which represented Somalis as ungrateful and child-like is recognisable in these comments; Aidid appears as a disobedient child who needed to be punished for his actions.

Both sides in debates about who was 'responsible' for Somalia and to what extent used Aidid to justify their positions. While difficulties with Aidid were presented by anti-interventionists as local politics with which international troops should not interfere, those who supported intervention insisted that UN and US troops could not leave Somalia until Aidid was removed from power so that humanitarian work could continue. Importantly, alternative approaches to dealing with Aidid rarely were featured in media coverage; forceful removal of Aidid from power is presented as the only option. This position was often presented in terms of UN and US troops needing to reclaim their strength and masculinity following the Pakistani deaths by 'taking out' Aidid; "The destruction of Aideed's ragtag militia had marked a turning point for the UN's peacekeeping image. 'For the first time we've shown we've got

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<sup>115</sup> ABC news, June 14, 1993.

balls,' gloated one senior UN military chief in Mogadishu. 'We're no longer sitting ducks for any Tom, Dick or Mohamed who wants to practise his shooting.'"<sup>116</sup>

By July 1993, media coverage of the Aidid manhunt was generally less favourable of the UN's approach under Admiral Howe and Boutros-Ghali. Both a July 1, 1993 *Times* article and a July 11, 1993 *New York Times* article point out that UN officials and troops are "virtual prisoners" in their compound, having been intimidated by Aidid's "straight gangster tactics". Aid workers are quoted in *The Times* article expressing disillusionment with the UN policy, which rendered Mogadishu so dangerous to Westerners that they could no longer work freely. *The New York Times* piece discusses growing dissension in UN ranks over the leading Americans' approach of singling out Aidid for attack.<sup>117</sup> By early August 1993, *The Times* reported growing Congressional dissatisfaction with US involvement in Somalia. While Admiral Howe was still quoted calling the landmine deaths of four US troops in Mogadishu part of the "terrorist campaign" of Aidid, American interest in capturing this particular 'terrorist' appeared to be waning.<sup>118</sup>

Despite this change in attitude with regards to the UN mission, general media opinion about Aidid himself did not change and his personal responsibility for his country's failed state was, if anything, re-emphasized. An August 15, 1993 *New York Times* article explains that "current and former United States officials who have dealt with General Aidid describe him as a megalomaniac who lusts for power" and the headline labels him "the man who makes Somalia worse". The same article quotes American Secretary of State Madeline Albright, an ongoing supporter of an internationally-involved America, claiming that Somalia could "fall back into the abyss" if left by UNOSOM II and that its people should be "lifted" from "the category

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<sup>116</sup> Richard Ellis, "Hide-and-Seek Warlord Defies UN", *The Sunday Times*, June 20, 1993.

<sup>117</sup> Donatella Lorch, "UN Troops Begin An Effort To Take Over Somali Streets", *The New York Times*, July 11, 1993 and Sam Kiley, "Aidid Cache Hit By Missiles As UN Braces For Attacks", *The Times*, July 1, 1993.

<sup>118</sup> Wolfgang Munchau et al, "Warlord Told US Deaths In Somalia Will Be Avenged", *The Times*, August 9, 1993.

of a failed state into that of an emerging democracy.”<sup>119</sup> Debates between those in favour of pulling out of the Somalia ‘quagmire’ versus intervention supporters continued and were highlighted again in late August and early September 1993 with discussions about whether the Ranger and Delta units sent to Somalia should be used to capture Aidid. The possibility of such a dramatic raid led CNN to bring more equipment into Somalia in readiness to document the capture or killing of the elusive Aidid.<sup>120</sup>

On September 14, *The New York Times* published two separate articles focusing on Aidid. One article explained that Aidid had offered to submit to the judgment of a special UN investigative commission appointed by the Security Council. This offer had been given to former US President Jimmy Carter to put forward on Aidid’s behalf. Carter claims that he passed the message on to Boutros-Ghali but “could not vouch for General Aidid’s sincerity in making the offer.”<sup>121</sup> Neither *The Times* nor ABC commented on Aidid’s offer.

On the same page in *The New York Times*, a longer article provided a character profile of Aidid, laying out the difficult situation in Mogadishu and Aidid’s role in creating it. Aidid is described as “a master of honeyed words, shifting alliances and brutal tactics”, his elegant, Western dress style is outlined, the fact that he has two wives and fourteen children is mentioned, and he is said to be “willing to sacrifice anything to achieve his goal.”<sup>122</sup> While this article in some ways associates Aidid with ‘Western’ values, he dresses like a “retired business executive” and is a “workaholic”, the mention of his polygamous marital status and his training in Moscow are among other factors which exoticize and differentiate him. As in most of the past coverage of him, Aidid’s ruthlessness and brutality are emphasized.

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<sup>119</sup> Steven A. Holmes, “The World; The Man Who Makes Somalia Worse”, *The New York Times*, August 15, 1993.

<sup>120</sup> Donatella Lorch, “UN Counts On US Rangers To Find Warlord”, *The New York Times*, August 26, 1993 and Richard Ellis, “Can ‘Delta Farce’ Now Get It Right?”, *The Times*, October 5, 1993.

<sup>121</sup> Neil A. Lewis, “UN Still Struggling With Somali General’s Militia; Aidid Proposes UN Panel”, *The New York Times*, September 14, 1993.

<sup>122</sup> Donatella Lorch, “UN Still Struggling With Somali General’s Militia”, *The New York Times*, September 14, 1993.

Aidid's image was unaltered by the events of 'Black Hawk down', while they represented a great shock and serious troop losses to the US, they were not significantly 'outside' behaviours which had long been part of his Western media representation. Aidid, along with the rest of the Somalia story, disappeared quickly from media coverage post-'Black Hawk down'. Aidid's successful evasion and survival of the raid and subsequent street battles were taken as confirmation of the success of his 'guerrilla' tactics. Much superior American firepower and technology had failed spectacularly at achieving its often-denied objective. Immediate press interest largely turned to understanding the failure of the mission in terms of the disastrous organisation of the mission due to poor UN policy and the perceived resistance of Somalia as a country to Western democratic development. Images and commentary on Aidid remained unchanged and often contained a hint of self-satisfaction; this 'villain' had indeed proved to be what had been predicted.

Immediately after the 'Black Hawk down' events, Aidid was portrayed as unwilling to negotiate with the US and the UN. This stance apparently came as no surprise to officials who believed that "the general will only talk if he feels at a military disadvantage."<sup>123</sup> Visual imagery of Aidid was also minimal; in all media sources he was shown only briefly addressing crowds of supporters. Some of these shots appeared to be old, archived footage, suggesting that few media personnel had ventured back into the dangerous conditions of Somalia post-'Black Hawk down' to capture new images. ABC's October 4, 1993 news briefly showed him walking, unharmed, while voiceover commented on how US casualties and the continuing failures to catch Aidid were leading to more criticism from Congress. Those opposed to leaving Somalia presented the situation in terms of the need to resist backing down to morally reprehensible leaders like Aidid; to be seen to "turn tail and run from any tin-horned dictators who come along"<sup>124</sup> was understood as intolerable Western weakness in the face of unworthy threats. This theme of 'holding the course despite Aidid' was

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<sup>123</sup> Donatella Lorch, "The Somalia Mission; Somali General Denounces Further Peace Talks", *The New York Times*, October 6, 1993.

<sup>124</sup> Comment by Diana Feinstein (Democrat-California) on *ABC Nightline*, October 5, 1993.

advocated by President Clinton who argued that it would be “open season on Americans” if “aggressors, thugs and terrorists” were allowed to think that killing US troops would create changes in US policies.<sup>125</sup> These statements were reiterated in all media sources. Just as Aidid’s alleged attacks on the Pakistanis had appeared to demand reaction and punishment, this incident also was seen as an unacceptable action against benevolent Western institutions that had Somalia’s best interests in mind.

Regardless of these sentiments, the political reality after ‘Black Hawk down’ was that the American Congress stepped up pressure on President Clinton for a US withdrawal date from Somalia. This deadline was set for March 31, 1994 and significantly influenced the participation of other UN contingents in the mission, given that many were highly dependent on US troops for their security and supplies. This reality also influenced media coverage in the sense that the Somalia intervention itself was seen to have failed and to essentially be ‘over’ even before US troops had left the country. There appeared to be little hope for further peace-building measures and this cynicism regarding any further involvement in Somalia was evident. A gap between the aggressive, Aidid-hunting policies of Admiral Howe and Boutros-Ghali and the more diplomacy-focused approach favoured by the American administration was made clear in media quotes of policymakers following ‘Black Hawk down’. Much media time was spent pointing out these policy discrepancies in the week following the attacks.

The vague approach of maintaining the UN resolution calling for Aidid’s arrest, but also letting it be known that if he ceased attacking UN troops Aidid would be allowed a place at peace-building talks was soon adopted and labelled a strategy of “constructive ambiguity” by US leaders.<sup>126</sup> As was stated by President Clinton, the US was no longer going to be involved in decisions about who ruled Somalia after their troops’ removal from the country; the knowledge that US and UN troops would leave regardless of conditions in Somalia put Aidid in a no-lose situation. Aidid’s declared ceasefire with regards to US and UN troops, announced on October 10, 1993, was

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<sup>125</sup> Clinton’s televised speech to the US nation on ABC news, October 7, 1993.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “Mission in Somalia; Dealing With Somalia: Vagueness As a Virtue”, *The New York Times*, October 15, 1993.

reported by all the media sources analysed; it was greeted with joy by Somali citizens who hoped it would provide an end to violence in Mogadishu.

ABC and BBC both covered Aidid's release of American hostage Michael Durant and a Nigerian peacekeeper on October 14, 1993. In both items, Aidid is shown coming out of hiding to talk to reporters. While still concerned about whether he would be arrested, Aidid stated his desire to be part of Somali peace-building negotiations and hinted that UN forces were no longer needed in Somalia and should leave. This willingness to negotiate appeared to be undermined by renewed fighting between Ali Mahdi and Aidid in Mogadishu, reported in *The New York Times* and on ABC on October 25, 1993. Reporter Paul Watson, one of the few Western journalists on the ground in Somalia, pessimistically stated that the UN did not get involved in any of the fighting since its troops were not at risk and suggested that this fighting was "almost certain to provoke more clan wars."<sup>127</sup> Although media coverage of Somalia rapidly decreased after October 1993, a *New York Times* article on November 9 claimed that Aidid's forces were guilty of taking shots at UN peacekeepers and were being very "uncooperative" with UN efforts.<sup>128</sup> A November 29, 1993 article reported rumours that Aidid was rearming, planning new attacks and not interested in participating in UN/US sponsored peace talks.<sup>129</sup>

In a manner similar to portrayals of Somali citizens, Aidid was presented as a wily and difficult child in much of this coverage, unable to be restrained by his reluctant 'parent' figures, namely the UN and the US. Somalis, including Aidid, were often discursively presented as ungrateful, squabbling children who would be best abandoned to their own devices. The American gesture of flying Aidid to Somali peace talks in Addis Ababa in early December was seen as ironic by some, given that Aidid had so recently been considered a figure who should be marginalized and shut out of the peace-building process in Somalia. These events, however, were met with only

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<sup>127</sup> ABC news, October 25, 1993.

<sup>128</sup> "Somali Gunmen Again Open Fire On UN Peacekeepers in Capital", *The New York Times*, November 9, 1993.

<sup>129</sup> "Aidid's Attendance At Aid Talks Is Tied To Backers' Release", *The New York Times*, November 29, 1993.



minimal comment by the media. Just as policymakers involved in Somalia appeared eager to end their role as this failed state's "baby-sitter" and "problem solver"<sup>130</sup>, the media had quickly moved on from Somalia after 'Black Hawk down'. Somalia again disappeared from Western public view, remembered only vaguely with mentions of words such as 'famine' and 'Black Hawk down'.

### Sum-up of Major Themes

The 'people' of Somalia are an extremely important category of analysis, as it was their particular 'character' which was often suggested to be the primary reason for the state's failure. Women and children were mostly slotted into traditional 'African famine' stereotypes of 'passive' victims, often providing a backdrop of suffering before which the debates on new American foreign policy trends took place. In sharp contrast, Somali men and boys were frequently presented as 'gang' members whose looting and violence was destroying their country. General Mohammed Farah Aidid was perhaps the most extreme example of this type of 'evil', 'selfish', 'third world' man. The visual and narrative style in which Somali men and boys were represented was at times highly reminiscent of other 'black' people deemed threats to the 'white' West, most notably African American men in ghettoised regions of America. Although important exceptions exist, Somali citizens were not widely permitted to narrate their own stories of their state's collapse; this was done primarily through Western 'experts'. Such patterns in coverage meant that towards the end of the intervention the anger and resentment of Somali citizens towards the interveners were not well understood. On a spectrum of interpretation, the events of 'Black Hawk down' thus appeared more often as an extreme, but not atypical, example of Somali violence and ungratefulness towards their 'saviours' rather than as a response to many perceived incidents of UN and US aggression and violence towards Somali civilians.

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<sup>130</sup> Oakley's comments are in: Donatella Lorch, "At Their Peace Talks, Somalis Mostly Shout", *The New York Times*, December 6, 1993.

Post-‘Black Hawk down’, memories of Somalia remained within the US government and lessons were learned, despite the event’s rapid disappearance from media agendas, particularly television. Policies and military practices changed substantially in order to allow American troops to meet new urban-based threats like Aidid and his followers more effectively. The role and position of media and communications during conflict periods and in conflict zones also clearly appears to have been considered and re-organised. The result has been significantly increased military and government efforts to ‘manage’ media and communications during recent conflicts involving the US, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, in comparison to Somalia. These efforts have been accepted by some segments of the media and strongly rejected by others; increasingly technological abilities are upping the abilities of both ‘sides’ to work around the other.

In terms of broader discourses for understanding global events, the 9/11 attacks have also proved important for the re-defining of America’s conception of its role in the world. The occasional use of the term ‘terrorism’ by media and policymakers during the Somalia conflict only begins to hint at the new and powerful discourses in which this term would be central, redefining large parts of the world as bastions of terror and threat. Countries like Somalia were no longer merely a danger and tragedy for their own inhabitants; they would soon be viewed as places of direct threat to citizens of the Western world as well. Despite these changes in the media’s sphere of operational abilities and governments’ and militaries’ conduct, however, many far-reaching discourses for understanding ‘place’ and ‘people’ during intervention and conflict have remained similar from events in Somalia to current times. The following chapter’s analysis of major discourses in media coverage of the 2004 American sieges of Fallujah will help to illustrate the extent to which ways of understanding ‘other’ people and places have followed similar patterns despite the passage of more than a decade and a significantly different context of intervention.



**Image 9:** Famine and hardship in Somalia – August 23, 1992  
Photographer- Scott Peterson



**Image 10:** A human skeleton and clothes lie in the dirt – August 23, 1992  
Photographer- Scott Peterson





Image 11: Healthy Somali children with food – ABC, June 21, 1993



Image 12: Somali men selling *khat* – ABC, December 7, 1992



Image 13: Hooded Somali man – ABC, December 7, 1992

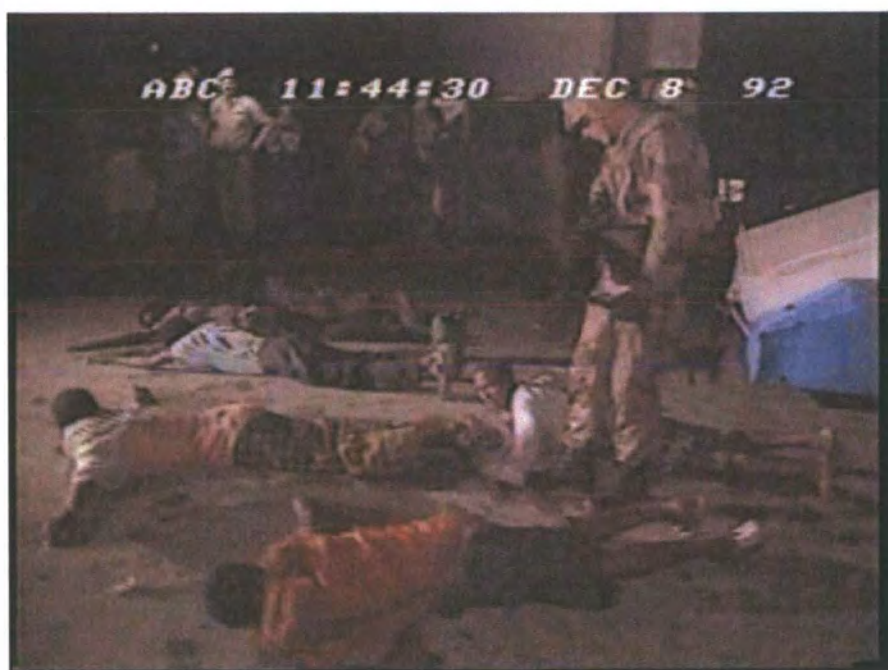


Image 14: Somali guards and workers arrested by US troops – ABC *Nightline*, December 8, 1992



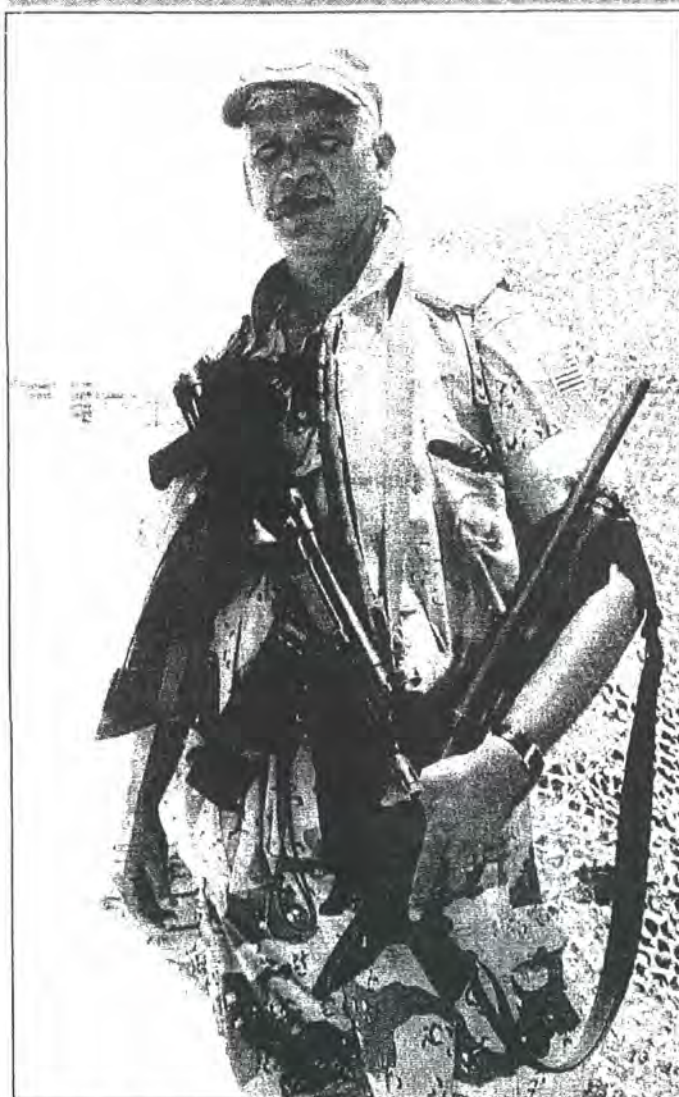


**Image 15(i):** Demonstrators assemble in Mogadishu – June 14, 1993  
Photographer- Scott Peterson



**Image 15(ii):** Somalis carry wounded to safety after US air attack – ABC, June 14, 1993

US marine with a price on his head



Dressed to kill: 'Big Tobacco' Collier ready for action in Mogadishu Picture: Paul Watson

## UN's Big Tobacco becomes Somalia's most wanted man

THE MOST feared man in Somalia was out on Mogadishu's streets last week, his shotgun slung across his back, two nine-inch knives tucked in his belt, and a trademark cigar butt hanging from his mouth. Major Mike Collier, a one-man fighting machine known as Big Tobacco by the gunmen who want to kill him, was ready for action.

Collier, an American marine, has the task of making the Somali capital safe for aid agencies to feed the hungry. The unconventional way he

by Paul Watson  
Mogadishu

has gone about it, sticking his pistol-grip shotgun at the head of anyone who challenges him, confiscating weapons and rounding up dozens of Somali suspects, has made him enemy no 1 to militiamen.

In tribute to the efficiency of *Tobacco Weyne*, the gunmen are advertising a \$25,000 bounty to anybody who kills him; the reward is the same amount the United Nations is

offering for the capture of General Mohammed Farah Aideed, the Somali warlord.

Collier, though, is unconcerned about having a price on his head. "It's easy to say, well, there's this reward for this guy," he said in his Tennessee drawl. "It's quite another thing to find the first two or three guys willing to try to collect it."

Yesterday the Somali gunmen showed themselves to be capable of horrific revenge. Three American soldiers were

*Continued on page 18*

Image 16: Somalia's "Rambo", Major Mike Collier – *Sunday Times*, September 26, 1993





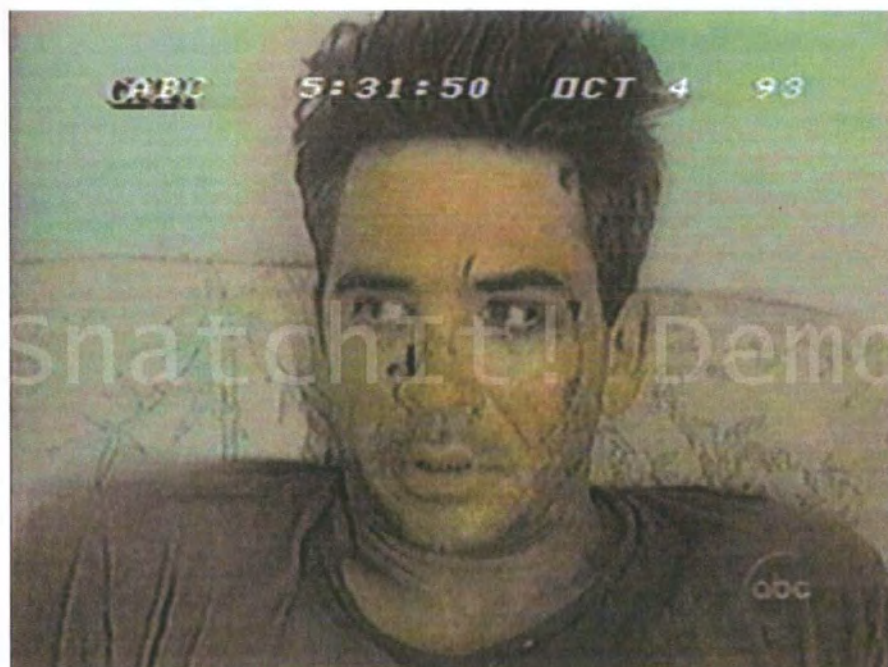
**Image 17(i):** Dragged and bound soldier's body – ABC, October 4, 1993



**Image 17(ii):** Another soldier's body dragged through streets – ABC, October 4, 1993



**Image 17(iii):** Dead US soldier's body – ABC, October 4, 1993



**Image 18:** Michael Durant held hostage – ABC, October 4, 1993



General Aideed, the UN's first 'wanted' man, taunts US: I have been bombarded at my house, but after that I was always in Mogadishu and they never came close to me'



General Mohamed Farah Aideed addressing a rally in south Mogadishu

Photograph: S. Peterson/Liaison

## Welcome to the lair of the warlord

GENERAL Mohamed Farah Aideed did not look like a man who has been hiding for 97 days from 30,000 troops backed by helicopter gunships, spy planes, the CIA and American special forces. Fresh-faced and smiling, he seemed to have put on weight. In red tie and pressed striped shirt, with gold-rimmed glasses and a gold-topped cane, he looked more like a successful businessman than a 'warlord' accused of causing the deaths of thousands of his own countrymen and more than 60 UN peace-keepers. Even when a US helicopter thudded overhead the UN's first 'wanted' man did not blinch.

It had been a strange journey from the journalists' hotel where General Aideed's aides had met us, racing through the smashed streets of Mogadishu, swerving past ragged children, wrecked cars, donkeys and piles of burning rubbish. We passed the burnt-out wreck of an American army truck used by the US Rangers in their fearful raid of 3 October and disappeared into the grid of narrow streets known as Wardingley, which means 'the well of blood'.

It is General Aideed's stronghold. In an alley we were ushered out of our car and into a Land Cruiser and took off again. At a small house we were taken to a darkened room and given a thorough body search, then back into the Land Cruiser and a further drive.

There was no sign of weapons at the smart, newly-painted house where we stopped. We were taken through a small courtyard into a sitting-room with thick carpets and plush sofas. There were plastic flowers on the table and a hint of perfume in the air. General Aideed came in surrounded by young men who did not appear to be armed. 'Hello, Richard, welcome. Nice to see you again,' he said, and took my hand with a bony grip as hard as his eyes.

Significantly he began with the thrice-repeated 'Aidahu Akbar' ('God is most great') — he is trying to draw the Islamic fundamentalists into his ranks — and then read from an eight-page document written in ballpoint on lined sheets of paper. It was, he said, a statement issued by the special meeting of the Leadership Council of the Somali National Alliance. It announced the unconditional release of the American pilot and the Nigerian soldier and called for the immediate and unconditional release of the Somalis 'who have been unlawfully abducted by the US Rangers'. Most of them are senior Aideed supporters who were arrested on 3 October and are being held pending investigation into attacks on UN forces.

The general called for a peaceful dialogue on the problems and the past, and welcomed President Bill Clinton's change of policy on Somalia. But the statement also said that the deployment of an extra 5,000 American troops in Somalia was unnecessary and would have a negative effect. 'The US and UN troops in Somalia should be reduced and the money spent on development,' General Aideed said.

He blamed the United Nations for killing or injuring 9,000 Somalis and the destruction of property, but he said that the US, far from correcting the UN mistakes, had 'pursued, promoted and encouraged the same destructive policies, and as a

**Richard Dowden in Mogadishu meets the man hunted by 30,000 US troops, who accuses the UN of killing or injuring 9,000 Somalis**

result merciless military operations which massacred hundreds of Somalis were launched'.

The SNA, the statement said, was 'the only movement in the country with a national political agenda and is supported by more than 70 per cent of the people'.

The UN resolutions ordering his capture he described as 'insider plots against this popular movement (the SNA) and the interests of the Somali people'. Answering questions, the general said US forces had never got near killing or capturing him and he had never left Mogadishu. 'I have been bombarded at my house at the beginning, but after that I was always in Mogadishu and they never came close to me.'

The US has kept up 24-hour surveillance of the city since Admiral Jonathan Howe, the UN special representative, issued a 'wanted' order for General Aideed in July, put a \$25,000 reward on his head and — it is believed — increased the CIA presence in the city. Spy planes patrol day and night and the US Quick Reaction Force has launched at least five attempts to kill or capture him, led by the US Rangers, the special forces. In each raid many Somalis were killed but General Aideed was never seen.

He said that he would remain in hiding for the time being because of 'contradictory statements' by the US and UN. But he believed the current ceasefire would hold and lead to peaceful dialogue.

On the question of facing charges from the UN for instigating the killing of 24 Pakistani troops on 5 June, he said: 'We have asked that an international commission of inquiry be set up to work out and find out the responsibility of all those crimes committed from 3 June.'

He reserved particular venom for the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who is due here next week. 'He has done the worst action against the Somali people,' he said, and accused him of being allied to the former President Siad Barre. Admiral Howe he described as 'harmful', and said he should leave Somalia.

When he was asked if he wanted to be the next president of Somalia he laughed and said demurely that it was for the Somali people to decide, but he described himself as 'having played a major role in the peace process' with an important political future.

The term 'warlord', he said, had been invented to damage his image. 'I am not warlord,' he said. Asked how it felt to have defeated both the United States and the United Nations, he said: 'When you fight for justice and you win you become happy. I believe I acted with my supporters fairly and in defence of Somalia.'

Image 19: "Warlord" Aidid – *The Independent*, October 15, 1993

## Chapter Six – Fallujah 2004: Lessons Learned & Bodies That Didn't Matter

Just over ten years after the 'Black Hawk down' images of US soldiers' bodies being dragged by Somalis shocked television viewers, a similar incident, at least in a visual sense, occurred in a new American 'theatre' of operations, Iraq. Two vehicles carrying four American civilian contractors were attacked by Iraqis using small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades. Crowds of Iraqis then pulled the bodies of the contractors from the burning vehicles, desecrated the bodies, dragged them through the streets and hung two of them over a bridge spanning the Euphrates River. The setting of these events, on March 31, 2004, was the predominately Sunni Muslim city of Fallujah, thirty miles west of Baghdad.<sup>1</sup>

As in Mogadishu in 1993, despite claims of 'saturation' media coverage Western publics were given only about two days of exposure to images of this 'event' before they were self-censored by the media. Even with the images gone, however, audiences were encouraged to 'remember' the killings in a variety of ways and at various times, as will be seen throughout this chapter. Both the White House and the Pentagon condemned the killings but followed with statements "hoping" that news managers would exercise "responsibility" and "good judgment" with regards to showing the images, rather than with outright opposition to their exposure.<sup>2</sup> While editorial debates are common in newsrooms when controversial or 'graphic' imagery arrives, discussions over which images from Fallujah should be shown became media stories in their own right. The day after the killings, the CNN *Newsnight* program ran an expert discussion on the affects and ethics of showing 'difficult' images. The Fallujah shots were thus immediately placed in a tradition of 'conflict' images, including those taken in Somalia after 'Black Hawk down', which, according to some analysts, had had an

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Geraci, "7 of Top 20 Papers Published Front-Page Fallujah Body Photos", April 1, 2004-  
[www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/article\\_brief/eandp/1/1000477951](http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/article_brief/eandp/1/1000477951) (accessed September 30, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Lynn Elber, "US TV Avoids Graphic Iraq Images Seen Worldwide", *The Associated Press*, March 31, 2004.

important impact on American foreign policy, although others contested this assessment.<sup>3</sup>

Communications scholar Barbie Zelizer noted this reflective mood in the media but also pointed out discrepancies between verbal and visual accounts of the events:

After the photos of four dead US contractors and the defilement of their bodies by an Iraqi mob in Falluja surfaced in April 2004, the news stories were graphic, detailed and unrelenting in their verbal accounts of what had happened. Yet the pictures were presented with a marked degree of ambivalence, as journalists pondered questions of decency, appropriateness...and worried about possible charges of sensationalism, political bias, and lack of patriotism.<sup>4</sup>

Zelizer suggests that in the last ten years the American public has become less willing to see 'graphic' war pictures. She cites a 1993 survey which suggested that the US public was evenly divided on whether images should be used as well as words to describe situations of war and murder. A more recent survey in 2004, after the contractors' deaths, is then referenced in contrast: "a full 71 percent of the American public felt that the pictures had been either too gruesome or sufficiently explicit."<sup>5</sup> Following from Zelizer's claims, a key question that this chapter will address is whether *The New Republic's* Adam Kushner was justified in suggesting that: "The Fallujah riots reveal something fundamentally amiss in American journalism- that an instinct to protect viewers is trumping an instinct to inform."<sup>6</sup> Issues and images from which viewers are being 'protected' will be as important an aspect of debate in this chapter as an analysis of what was shown of Fallujah in selected Western media.

Media sources that had aligned themselves most closely with the Bush administration appeared to be most ready to censor the Fallujah images. The conservative and pro-war Fox News channel in the US showed only shots of the

<sup>3</sup> CNN *Newsnight* with Aaron Brown, "Images of War/History/Turnley and Burns Interview", April 1, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Barbie Zelizer, "Death in Wartime: Photographs and the 'Other War' in Afghanistan", *Press/Politics* 10, no. 3, Summer (2005): 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30. The 1993 survey was conducted by Times Daily Mirror while the 2004 survey is cited as a *Time/CNN* poll.

<sup>6</sup> Adam B. Kushner, "See No Evil", *The New Republic* (online), April 2, 2004, <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=express&s=kushner040204> (accessed July 10, 2004).

burning vehicles in which the contractors had been riding and clips of yelling Iraqi crowds. CBS contemplated showing larger amounts of the footage but by airtime had decided against it. CNN was the only American broadcaster mentioned which decided to air a few unedited seconds of video showing two burned bodies dangling from the bridge, preceded by a viewer discretion warning. Overseas, other Western media mentioned in a report on the extent of coverage of the attacks were more explicit in their stories; several showed blurred images of bodies being dragged through the streets as well as unaltered shots of the corpses hung on the bridge.<sup>7</sup>

Newspaper coverage was bolder than television in the US, but many still chose not to feature the images too prominently. A report on newspaper coverage the following day by Charles Geraci announced that “only seven of the 20 highest circulating papers chose to display photos of the bodies on their front pages.” Of those that did, the most commonly shown image was one of Iraqis chanting anti-American slogans in front of two charred bodies hanging from the bridge; some images were zoomed in so that the corpses were more visible, while others chose to keep them in the background (See Figures 6 and 7); “Arguably, the most graphic front-page images were shown by *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*. Both displayed Iraqis taking turns beating the burned corpses with shoes.” (See Figure 8)<sup>8</sup> While some of the papers showed more graphic photos on inside pages but avoided them on their covers, Geraci notes that “many smaller publications ran photos featuring a charred body or bodies on their front pages.”<sup>9</sup>

Geraci’s report is corroborated by research that I conducted on the Newseum.org website, which carries the front pages of many top American and world newspapers. *The Guardian* also showed the photo of men and boys beating the charred corpses with shoes. In all cases, however, the original photo, taken by Ali Jasim, was

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<sup>7</sup> Elber, “US TV Avoids Graphic Iraq Images Seen Worldwide”.

<sup>8</sup> Although this image illustrates the front coverage of *The Guardian* newspaper, this is a very similar shot to that used by *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Geraci, “7 of Top 20 Papers Published Front-Page Fallujah Body Photos”. The 2 quotations above are also from this source.

cropped to varying degrees and edited to make the ashes appear less 'corpse-like'.<sup>10</sup> A very rarely shown image appeared on the cover of *The New York Sun* (see Figure 9); in this image, a body, including arms and hands, is clearly seen on fire. A survey of Newseum.org found that this image was shown in only two other world newspapers which the site carries, *The National Post* of Canada and the Italian *La Stampa*. Many papers chose front cover images which did not show the bodies at all; only yelling Iraqis and burnt vehicles are depicted. (See Figure 10)

Such evidence suggests, following Zelizer's comments, that issues of taste and decency strongly influenced which images many media organisations decided to show of the Fallujah attacks. The airing of special discussion programs also indicates that such issues were probably more explicitly on the minds of media producers than during the Somalia intervention. In the wake of 'Black Hawk down', the ways in which these images might recall US government policies and actions around the 1993 event for audiences and possibly inflame anti-Iraq war sentiments were considered by the media, and likely by American policymakers as well. While issues of taste were important, political considerations regarding how the images would be 'read', particularly by American audiences, were also significant once the images existed.

As time passed, the most repeated images tied to the Fallujah killings by television media were shots of the burning frame of one of the SUVs driven by the contractors with a cut to images of yelling crowds of Iraqi men and boys. These images were neither highly 'graphic' nor did they obviously distinguish this violent occurrence from many others taking place in Iraq. They required the variety of supplemental descriptions which were attached to them in order to create a meaningful 'event' and to both tie them back to and take them beyond the now-invisible desecrated bodies.

In both cases studied in depth for this work, Mogadishu in Somalia and Fallujah, the killing and desecration of US bodies was almost immediately linked to

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<sup>10</sup> For views of the newspaper front pages, see [http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default\\_archive.asp?page=8](http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default_archive.asp?page=8) (accessed July 11, 2007). For original Ali Jasim photo, courtesy of Reuters, see [www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/04-2NRSummer/71-74V58N2.pdf](http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/04-2NRSummer/71-74V58N2.pdf) (accessed July 11, 2007).

discussions of what these events meant for 'America' and its role in Somalia and Iraq. These debates occurred in spheres of popular culture, political debate and military planning and often sought to fill gaps in public knowledge, which had allowed events in Mogadishu and Fallujah to appear as 'out of the blue' for many in Western audiences. Mark Bowden's work chronicling the viewpoints of the US soldiers involved in the October 3-4 raids led to the publication of his book *Black Hawk Down*, which subsequently was made into a Ridley Scott-directed action film with support from the American military establishment.<sup>11</sup> Events in Fallujah, which were compared early on to those in Mogadishu, have also grown to fuel their own media creations, mainly in the realms of video games, but also with some rumours of a potential film.

In both cases, efforts were made to re-narrate the events and their aftermath as stories of success and redemption for American forces. In *Black Hawk Down*, the bravery and patriotism of individual American soldiers is emphasized; those who play Fallujah-based video games have the opportunity to act as members of the US military and to win the city back for American forces. Western media coverage of both events had frequently supported these narrative framings by focusing intensively on US personnel and the policy implications of specific occurrences for America and the West. To the extent that it did, other important aspects of both events often 'disappeared'; this is particularly true of the people and places being subjected to intervention. Thus, as with the Somalia case, an exploration of how selected media coverage facilitated these disappearances will be of key importance throughout this chapter.

Despite the limited appearance of images of the contractor attack in newspapers and on TV screens, there is little question that the event had some effect on American military policy with regards to Fallujah. The strongly-worded media descriptions of the attack, and the linkages made with past incidents including Mogadishu, were integral to it, although it cannot be definitively proved that they had direct influence on policymakers. What is known is that according to Marine Colonel John Toolan, whose

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<sup>11</sup> See Debbie Lisle and Andrew Pepper's specific work on this subject, "The New Face of Global Hollywood: *Black Hawk Down* and the Politics of Meta-Sovereignty", *Cultural Politics* 1, is. 2 (2005): 165-192.



forces were in the process of taking control of Fallujah from an army unit in late March 2004, the killings fuelled military action, which then likely generated media coverage in a cyclical process. Toolan explained in an interview for PBS *Frontline* that he had hoped his forces could resolve the tensions with Fallujans in a more peaceful way. The contractors' deaths resulted in orders from his superiors to retake Fallujah by force: "Blackwater [the security company for which the contractors worked] guys were killed and then within 24 hours we were given the word that we need to go back and into the city."<sup>12</sup>

Only occasionally mentioned in media coverage of the US intervention in Iraq up to this point, Fallujah now became a centre of media and American military attention. According to some descriptions, the city of Fallujah and its residents had been 'problems' since the beginning of the American intervention in Iraq; occasionally disturbances were traced back further to the days of rule by dictator, Saddam Hussein. Residents of Fallujah, when discussed outside the umbrella term of the city's name itself, were often described *en masse* in a variety of derogatory ways including as 'Saddam-supporters', terrorist sympathizers and Islamic extremists. These were people who, unlike much of the rest of the Iraqi population, were often seen to have benefited from Hussein's rule and were thus suggested to have the most reason to oppose American actions in Iraq as a whole. As conditions in Iraq fluctuated, Fallujah and its residents were commonly used as a symbol for most of the challenges Americans faced in 'pacifying' and 'democratizing' the country. It is this media coverage, and the major themes developed within it, to which this chapter will now turn.

### **Analysing Fallujah: Background & Coverage Overview**

Although the case study of Fallujah will not be analysed using the same volume of media coverage or attempt to span as long a time period as the Somalia intervention case study, the theoretical and methodological approach to this case will be similar.

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<sup>12</sup> See "Interview with Marine Col. John Toolan" on the website for PBS *Frontline*, "Private Warriors", <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/warriors/interviews/toolan.html> (accessed June 21, 2005).

Analysis of media coverage of events in Fallujah will thematize and scrutinize predominant frameworks used for interpreting circumstances as they were presented. These frameworks will then be challenged and explored with reference to alternative narratives and less-covered perspectives. This chapter will also investigate the new developments and conditions in conflict reporting which changed the ways in which conflicts such as Fallujah could be reported, thus bringing a more recent case study to bear on many issues of media representation of conflict already presented in the Somalia coverage chapters. This chapter will be structured, however, around themes in coverage which indicate that, to a significant extent, not much has changed since Somalia. Although this is a case which needs to be studied in its own right, the similarities noticed in coverage themes warrant further recognition and exploration in a concluding chapter.

Although many aspects of Fallujah's history have undoubtedly been subject to debate long before the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, it is important to establish a timeline of some events preceding the deaths of the American civilian contractors there in March 2004 which could be deemed relevant to this particular moment in time. This background will provide additional information not available in selected media coverage of the two American 'sieges' of Fallujah in April 2004 and November 2004. The April assault on the city was rhetorically tied directly to the contractor deaths. Its stated aim was to 'pacify' Fallujah, where incidents of violence against American forces, international contractors and American-supported Iraqi forces had recently occurred, and to capture and try those responsible for the deaths and mutilation of the contractors. The long-anticipated November 2004 attack was designed to finish what had been started in April. All 'insurgent' forces and 'foreign fighters' were to be killed or driven out of Fallujah in order to again to 'pacify' the city before the first Iraqi elections post-US invasion.

An Associated Press summary of events categorizes the first major negative incident between US forces and Fallujah citizens as occurring on April 28, 2003.<sup>13</sup> Media estimates varied between thirteen and sixteen Iraqis reported killed and up to seventy-five wounded after a crowd demonstrating against the occupation of an elementary school by American troops came under fire from US forces. Fallujah had been taken over by American Special Forces in early April, about two weeks after the commencement of the ground war in Iraq, but had remained without a permanent US military presence until the arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne regiment in the week before this initial incident.<sup>14</sup>

Perceptions of this incident varied widely among Americans and Iraqis and these divergent positions were represented by Western media. American troops claimed that the demonstration had been violent and that they had been shot at by members of the crowd before returning fire in self-defense. Fallujah's residents for the most part said that they were shot at without warning and in an overreaction to stones thrown by the crowd at troops occupying the building. For some media commentators, these events alone were seen as sufficient and potentially critical for provoking later incidents of resident and insurgent aggression against US forces. Most sampled media coverage read this violent incident as indicative of things to come across Iraq. An *Independent* article declared that "(h)atred is taking hold here, and throughout Iraq" and claimed that the violence in Fallujah "goes to the heart of the problems the US forces face on the ground in a country which- though glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein- is ambivalent about living under occupation".<sup>15</sup> This framing of Fallujah, and others like it, tended to focus more on Iraqis' perceptions of the intervention, its historical context for them and its impacts on their lives. Alternative framings suggested that "support remains strong for fallen president Saddam Hussein" in Fallujah and described many

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<sup>13</sup> Associated Press, "Summary: a Timeline on Events in Fallujah", November 8, 2004, <http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/world/sns-ap-fallujah-timeline,0,799615.story?coll=ny-worldnews-toputility> (accessed July 10, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Scott Wilson, "US Forces Kill 2 More Civilians; Tensions Remain High in City in Central Iraq", *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Phil Reeves, "The War Is Over (Except for Iraq)", *The Independent*, May 1, 2003.

powerful groups in the city as owing their positions and influence to Hussein.<sup>16</sup> These groups, which were occasionally said to include clerics, were positioned as instigators of anti-American activities in contrast to 'most' residents, although at times the media represented the situation as if all Fallujans supported the insurgency. This early coverage of Fallujah hints at the multiplicity of interpretations available, and their possible impacts on the American approach to Fallujah, which will be explored in more depth below.

Less than forty-eight hours after the April 28, 2003 incident, US troops shot dead two more people and injured at least eight after another resident protest was held to condemn the earlier killings. Again, American forces claimed that they had been attacked first by evil-doers who were deliberately using residents as cover for their shooting. According to a *Guardian* article describing the events, however, "protestors started throwing rocks and shoes at the [US] compound and troops opened fire about 10:30am, scattering demonstrators."<sup>17</sup> The tense situation between Fallujah residents and US troops continued throughout May 2003. In two separate incidents, troops were reported injured and killed when a grenade was thrown into their base in Fallujah and later in an attack on a military checkpoint in the city. In June 2003, hundreds of US troops swept through Fallujah in an alleged operation against guerrilla resistance in the city.<sup>18</sup> After this incident, news from Fallujah was minimal in Western media until the March 2004 contractor deaths. As was highlighted in the methods chapter, the April and November 2004 sieges represented high points in Western media coverage of Fallujah after the contractor deaths so it is these periods will be now investigated in depth.

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<sup>16</sup> Scott Wilson, "US Forces Kill 2 More Civilians; Tensions Remain High in City in Central Iraq", *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> George Wright and agencies, "US Troops 'Shoot Dead Two More Iraqis'", *Guardian Unlimited*, April 30, 2003, [www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,4658721-103681,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,4658721-103681,00.html) (accessed July 10, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> *Guardian Unlimited* online Fallujah timeline, [www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/page/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/page/) (accessed September 30, 2006).

### Fallujah: 'A Dangerous Insurgent Hotbed'

Derek Gregory effectively highlights an important aspect of Fallujah's representation as a place when he discusses the reduction of Iraqi cities to areas of "object-space" rather than people-space in his work, *The Colonial Present*. A result of this strategy was that damage inflicted on Iraqi cities during the American invasion of Iraq, which had massive impacts on civilians given Iraq's high level of urbanisation, could be viewed as the successful, or unsuccessful, targeting of enemy territory rather than as often deadly actions against a civilian population growing increasingly angry at such treatment. Gregory cites passages from *Doctrine for Joint Urban Operations*, a report prepared for the Joint Chiefs of Staff which was published in September 2002, as well as media coverage to illustrate the ways in which "imaginative geographies were mapped onto the American public sphere to align military and civilian geographical knowledge."<sup>19</sup> Practically, this transfer of framing and language often resulted from the terminology and imagery used in briefing papers and presentations given to media through the embedding process and specialised media centres, which put involved journalists in constant contact with military units. As was discussed in the work of Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer in Chapter One of this work, these processes often had the effect of bombarding media personnel with only select and specialised forms of information, while physically preventing them from exploring other aspects of the intervention. In both subtle and obvious ways, the media were encouraged to adopt the American administration's framework and vocabulary for Iraqi space. (See Image 20)

As suggested by the heading of this section, frameworks for understanding Iraqi cities including Fallujah often involved efforts at both visually and rhetorically distancing Western viewers and readers from the human element fundamental to all urban spaces. Comments on the three-dimensionality of urban terrain evoked images of cities as dense, dangerous places, full of potential hiding places for ambushes and

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<sup>19</sup> Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Group, 2004), 201.

sniper attacks. The complex and varied physical structures in cities were thus presented as 'problems', inhibiting total surveillance of urban areas by American military technology and rendering difficult the 'accurate' targeting of perceived enemy bodies and infrastructure. As will be discussed in a further section, these references to 'dark', 'complex' and 'dangerous' physical geographies in cities were often transplanted directly onto city residents as well. 'Dangerous' cities would logically contain 'dangerous' people- snipers, insurgents and other terrorist forces- rather than being viewed as networks of vital services and peoples' homes.

Interestingly, common historical references and comparisons to the situation in Iraq were often appropriated by opposing sides of the conflict. Gregory comments that the new American military discourses on urban geographies not only drew directly on Israeli experiences in the occupied Palestinian territories but also called to mind American studies of the complex system of bunkers and tunnels used by the Viet Cong during warfare in that country.<sup>20</sup> Explicit comparisons were made to strategies of the Vietnam War by those opposing American intervention as well: "Tariq Aziz [former Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq] had warned that Iraq aimed to create 'a new Vietnam' for the United States in its cities: 'People say to me you are not the Vietnamese. You have no jungles and swamps to hide in. I reply: Let our streets be our jungles, let our buildings be our swamps.'" <sup>21</sup> Those opposed to American intervention in Iraq and elsewhere around the globe were well aware of the American public's perceived sensitivity to casualties amongst their troops. Their lesson was that in asymmetrical warfare, where the Americans clearly held the upper hand in terms of military technology and equipment, fighting in the open would result in quick defeat. The physical density of cities would help to render surveillance technology less effective and, provided the Americans did not simply decide to level a city altogether, would result in the necessity of close-quarters fighting where newer technology did not hold such a massive advantage. American forces, on the other hand, wanted to deny the

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<sup>20</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*: 201-202.

<sup>21</sup> Scott Peterson, "Iraq Prepares For Urban Defense", *Christian Science Monitor*, October 4, 2002 cited in Gregory's *The Colonial Present*, 201.

possibility that Iraq could become a Vietnam-style 'quagmire', consisting of largely ineffective aerial bombing combined with brutal ground warfare. Confidence in new technology was high, and US forces intended to use their aerial dominance, 'smart' weapons, and urban combat-trained troops to reveal any hidden traps lurking in Iraqi cities.

For both sides, 'civilians' remained a contested and highly significant category. Foreign and 'insurgent' forces, if and where they had a presence in various Iraqi cities, could not afford to completely alienate civilians, as they often required a certain amount of tolerance in order to exist amongst the local population in dense city environments and protecting Islamic countries from foreign domination was one of their stated goals. Similarly, the presence of American forces in Iraq was largely justified on humanitarian grounds, especially as evidence of Iraq's production and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction and its pre-existing connections with al-Qaeda remained unproven. American actions which injured or killed Iraqi civilians were thus obviously counter to stated American goals of protecting and developing Iraq as a country; they further had the potential to fuel beliefs in the Middle East that the US had alternative, largely-imperialist, motivations for its involvement in Iraq. Importantly, however, the civilian-insurgent dichotomy was not one that could be easily perpetuated in Iraq, especially in Fallujah, where it was often suggested that citizens who might one day protest and fight against invading US troops might the next day return to their normal occupations and lives when US troops withdrew from the city limits. The deaths of civilians at the hands of either the Americans or the insurgent forces remained a political tool which could be used by both sides to condemn the other. One result of this factor, an absence of Iraqi casualty figures in Western media coverage during times of US military activity, will be discussed in detail in a following section. Its link to the 'places' theme of condemning Fallujah as a city will be evident, however, through this section.

*The Islamic city: linking Fallujah to Sunni 'fundamentalism' and Saddam Hussein*

Because there had been minimal coverage of Fallujah in Western media until the contractor killings at the end of March 2004, it is important to explore the ways in which this event was contextualized with background information provided on Fallujah as a place. This sub-section will analyse how Fallujah was represented as a Ba'athist, extremist city in American newspapers, UK newspapers and in CNN television reports, a comparative approach that will be followed throughout further sections. American newspaper coverage studied indicates that some initial media descriptions of Fallujah repeatedly focused on its alleged status as a highly traditional Islamic city. In an Associated Press (AP) article, this piety is linked with anti-American sentiments: "The fight against the US-led occupation has strong religious undertones in Fallujah, reflecting the Sunni Muslim city's conservative nature, its reputation for piety and deep anti-US sentiments...It also is part of Iraq's Sunni heartland, a large swath of land that stretches north and west of the Iraqi capital where armed resistance to the US occupation is fierce."<sup>22</sup> This quote also mentions an important association of Fallujah geographically with 'the Sunni triangle', an area which would come to be repeatedly associated with support for Saddam Hussein.

Another AP article locates Fallujah in the Sunni triangle after describing the killings of the American contractors in detail; "Fallujah is in the so-called Sunni Triangle, where support for Saddam Hussein was strong and rebels often carry out attacks against American forces."<sup>23</sup> The day after the violence, when the Fallujah killings made the front page of *The New York Times*, Khalid Mohammed's image of Iraqis cheering in front of the suspended, burned bodies was placed next to an article which also presented Fallujah in ominous terms; "Since the war in Iraq began, Fallujah has been a flashpoint of violence. Of all the places in Iraq, it is where anti-American hatred is the strongest. The area is predominately Sunni Muslim. Many families

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<sup>22</sup> Hamza Hendawi, "Marines Seek to Pacify Fallujah With Show of Force; Residents Are Skeptical", *The Associated Press*, March 31, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Sameer N Yacoub, "Bodies of Foreigners Dragged Through Streets of Fallujah; Bomb Kills Five US Troops", *The Associated Press*, March 31, 2004.



remain loyal to the captured dictator, Mr. Hussein, who is also a Sunni Muslim.”<sup>24</sup> The above articles present Fallujah as a city with a history of violence into which the contractor deaths are added as one more example. Only a Jeffrey Gettleman article (details in footnote 22), gives a one sentence mention of the violence committed by US troops against civilian protesters. Violence in Fallujah is otherwise exclusively described as being perpetrated by Iraqis against US forces.

In the citations above, a link is also made between Sunni Muslims and support for Saddam Hussein, a connection which in some other articles is challenged by alternative explanation from Fallujah residents, who link their frustrations and anti-Americanism to US troop actions in Fallujah rather than to any lingering ties to Saddam Hussein. Indeed, Hussein ran a comparably secular government to some others in the region and tended to use religion instrumentally to manipulate his public support which may have proved unpopular with the more religious elements in Fallujan society. An important explanatory factor, briefly brought up later in the above Gettleman article, recognizes the patronage that Sunni communities such as Fallujah had received from the Hussein regime. Its collapse meant a loss of power, businesses and jobs for many Sunni communities, who as a minority in Iraq were already concerned about their role in a new democratic system. The simple equation of benefits and privileges with support for Hussein personally can obscure important economic dynamics of the previous Iraqi regime which American interveners often struggled to navigate.

As Marine incursions into Fallujah began following the contractor deaths, these more subtle points regarding the position of Fallujah in post-intervention Iraq continued to be overshadowed in US newspaper coverage by a focus on the city as a place of violence and turbulence. The term “hotbed of Sunni resistance” was used repeatedly, along with depictions of Fallujah as “boiling”. A history of Fallujah as a “problem” city was reinforced by US military commanders. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “4 From US Killed in Ambush in Iraq; Mob Drags Bodies”, *The New York Times*, April 1, 2004.

called Fallujah no “garden paradise” and said “Fallujah has been a problem, a significant problem for the coalition and for Iraqi security forces for many, many months.”<sup>25</sup> Following from these statements came imperatives; Fallujah could not be allowed to continue as ‘out of control’ and now required strong handling. The above article closed with a statement from army officers calling Fallujah a “hornet’s nest”, which had been stirred up by Marine failures to act firmly enough.

As the April fighting wound down, the characterization of Fallujah as both a “fundamentalist” and a Ba’athist city returned to newspaper pages. A May 1, 2004 *New York Times* article discussed the involvement of Islamic political parties in negotiations with the Americans in both Fallujah and the Shi’a city of Najaf. An Iraqi professor from the University of Baghdad was quoted supporting these efforts because Fallujah was “a fundamentalist city” and “(t)he people there are very religious”. Although complicating factors involving the marginalization of Sunni people from governing structures due to the Americans’ de-Ba’athification program were also described in this article, the broad-scale association of Fallujah with both Islamic extremism and support for Saddam Hussein continued to predominate and was chosen for quotable material.<sup>26</sup>

Occasionally, an important counter-narrative emerged from American newspaper coverage, suggesting that Fallujah, rather than being a unique stronghold of insurgency, was simply representative of larger anti-American sentiments across much of Iraq. Shortly after the March attacks, a *New York Times* article proposed that: “(t)o dismiss Falluja as a tragic aberration, it is first necessary to place the city in a separated class, as General Kimmitt did when he said, ‘Falluja remains one of those cities in Iraq that just don’t get it,’ as though most of the others did...But Falluja is not the only place where mob violence has taken over once insurgents have killed foreign soldiers or civilians.”<sup>27</sup>

*New York Times* articles did occasionally compare uprisings in Fallujah with those in the city of Najaf and violence in other Iraqi centres continued to be reported.

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<sup>25</sup> Eric Schmitt, “Test In a Tinderbox”, *The New York Times*, April 28, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Wong, “Falluja Role Gives Stature to Islamic Party”, *The New York Times*, May 1, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> John F. Burns, “The Long Shadow of a Mob”, *The New York Times*, April 4, 2004.

These comparisons were likely unsettling for the US administration, as they tended to expose large-scale failures and inconsistencies in the American effort to democratize Iraq, rather than to highlight areas which due to their own dynamics were said to be resisting peace and democracy. The infamy of the contractor killings remained a distinguishing point for Fallujah, however, and despite violence in other areas of Iraq this Sunni city's notoriety remained. Interestingly, the accompanying photo for the Burns article above, which contests Fallujah's uniqueness, is one of the more 'graphic' images of the contractor killings, described as Iraqi children pointing to a body part after the mutilation of the contractors.

UK newspaper coverage utilized some of the same frames of understanding as the analysed American newspaper coverage but tended to regard the American intervention in Iraq as a whole in a more sceptical light, probably reflecting the greater sense of discomfort of their readership with the war and its aims. While American coverage had tended to present Fallujah as a particular 'problem' city in Iraq and to explain why this was the case in military and political terms, British coverage more often explained Fallujah as a reflection of broader problems with the entirety of US policy in Iraq.

Initially, representations of Fallujah as a dangerous, highly-religious and Ba'athist city were rhetorically reminiscent of American portrayals, especially in certain newspapers. A *Daily Telegraph* article immediately following the contractor killings declared Fallujah to be "one of the most violent, restive towns in Iraq since the US-led occupation began. It is an extremely pro-Saddam town in a staunchly pro-Saddam area known as the Sunni Triangle. Residents are famously religious: women are rarely seen in public and even the kebab shops have prayer rooms."<sup>28</sup> A further *Telegraph* article on April 6, 2004 elaborated on the dangers Fallujah posed to attacking US troops: "Fallujah is awash with illegal arms, including heavy weapons, and any incursion into the city is

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<sup>28</sup> Jack Fairweather, "American Dead Butchered 'Like Sheep'. Jubilant Crowds Drag Mutilated Bodies Through Streets of Pro-Saddam Town They Call a 'Cemetery For Americans'", *The Daily Telegraph*, April 1, 2004.

fraught with risk.”<sup>29</sup> The invasion by American troops was shown to have had little effect on Fallujah’s dangerous status by late May 2004: “Foreign insurgents suspected of links to al-Qaeda have established a firm foothold in the flashpoint Iraqi city of Fallujah. A well-armed group infiltrated the city before fighting erupted in March and is continuing to mount operations against the coalition and Westerners in the area- in defiance of Fallujah’s mosques, the army and the police force.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the use of similar terminology as the American newspapers, there appeared to be more attempts in some of the British coverage analysed to investigate Fallujah’s situation in ways which questioned why it had become a danger zone for coalition troops. Even before the contractor killings, a *Guardian* article warned that Fallujah’s population was already “resentful” and that the behaviour of the Marines towards the population there seemed to risk making the same mistakes as their army predecessors.<sup>31</sup> A further *Guardian* article interviewed Fallujah’s city council chief and quoted him discussing one of the biggest problems with American assumptions regarding Fallujah: “‘They are dealing with the Sunnis as if they are all supporters of Saddam Hussein and that is a big mistake,’ Mr. Hassan says.”<sup>32</sup> Further articles, mostly found in *The Guardian*, quoted other Iraqis supporting this view.<sup>33</sup> Several articles recognized the disastrous consequences of the Fallujah invasions for American-Iraqi relations all over the country, pointing out that the levels of violence during the assault had made the Americans enemies of both extremist and moderate Iraqis alike.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> David Blair, “US Marines in Fallujah Sweep”, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 6, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Lee Gordon, “Iraqi Fighters Turn Against ‘Out Of Control’ Al-Qaeda Insurgents, Saudi-Backed Terrorists Defy the Army, Police and Religious Leaders in Their Push For Final Showdown With the Coalition”, *The Sunday Telegraph*, May 30, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Graham, “Falluja Fury As Marines Move In to Restore Calm: Iraq’s Death Toll Climbs Over Weekend As US Forces Clash With Guerrillas”, *The Observer*, March 28, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Rory McCarthy, “Iraqi Politician Hits a Wall of Frustration In Attempt to Build a Future For His Town: A Year After the Assault On Iraq, the Guardian Finds a Local Leader Frustrated By a Lack of Aid From the US”, *The Guardian*, March 17, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Luke Harding, “Iraq Conflict: ‘It’s Hell... Everything Will Be Destroyed’: Refugees, Troops Don’t Care Who They Shoot, Say Fleeing Locals”, *The Guardian*, April 30, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Rory McCarthy, “Uneasy Truce In the City of Ghosts: Rory McCarthy Talks to Survivors of the US Forces Assault on Falluja, the Bloodiest Battle of the Uprising, Which Doctors Say Killed Up to 600 Iraqis”, *The Guardian*, April 24, 2004.

Like the American coverage, the UK media used Fallujah as a symbol but it was not only made the representative of Islamic fundamentalism and support for Saddam Hussein. The city also became synonymous with failures and u-turns in US Iraq policy, especially in newspapers which routinely expressed strong scepticism about or opposition to the Iraq invasion. British newspapers were also more explicit about the difficulties faced by the media in covering the Fallujah sieges and the ways in which this factor restricted the types of coverage that could be produced:

Part of the problem in determining whether the coalition's tactics have been appropriate is that, by the very nature of the siege, with the town surrounded by coalition troops, it is impossible for media or outside agencies to determine what is happening inside. Observation from outside is confined to aircraft, explosions and fires. It is impossible to confirm figures on casualties or to establish whether they include many civilians and children, as Iraqis allege, or are mainly male fighters, as US forces say.<sup>35</sup>

CNN television coverage of the incidents in Fallujah in 2004 uses similar vocabulary to that identified in both American and UK newspapers but, because of the medium's more extensive visual aspect, it allows for a more thorough investigation of how these frameworks are developed through imagery as well as textually/verbally. From the first reports of the contractors' deaths, CNN coverage also linked Fallujah as a city with support for Saddam Hussein. Images of Hussein were shown immediately following those illustrating the contractors' deaths with the explanation that Fallujah was at the heart of the 'Sunni triangle', the area which had the highest level of support for the deposed dictator.<sup>36</sup> The association of the city with support for Hussein continued throughout coverage of the Marines' April attack on Fallujah and a tendency also developed to associate it with other figures viewed as enemies of the US invasion, thus distinguishing it as a 'problem' city. A Western expert on an April 6, 2004 CNN

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<sup>35</sup> Bronwen Maddox, "Fallujah Becomes a Symbol For Both Sides As US Changes Its Tactics", *The Times*, April 30, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> *Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, Habbaniyah*, CNN news, March 31, 2004. This title style exactly replicates the way in which television items which can be streamed are referenced in the Vanderbilt Television Media Archive. CNN items will be footnoted consistently in this way throughout this chapter.

program described Fallujah as being a “tough nut” which had “always been solidly anti-American.”<sup>37</sup> Iraqis in other parts of the country were said to be urging the US to keep up its military actions in Fallujah, as the city had apparently long been a source of insecurity in Iraq.<sup>38</sup> An “Insider’s View” item on the Fallujah situation, which purports to explain why Fallujah is violently resisting American occupation, also begins by calling the city a “tough town”, even under the Hussein regime. Although the item concludes by calling Fallujah “a company town for Saddam’s military”, it was said to be a rebellious area that was occasionally willing to challenge the dictator’s policies.<sup>39</sup> Fallujah’s alleged opposition to both old and new forms of authority in this case appears to be used to confirm its status as a long-term ‘problem’ city which must now be brought under control, with the implication seeming to be by any means necessary.

As US troops began the final late April push to take Fallujah, rhetoric focusing on Fallujah as ‘pro-Saddam’ and mentions of the need to ‘pacify’ the city by violent means were explicitly stated. Several CNN reports in April opened with statements by anchor Aaron Brown calling Fallujah “a city which has long bedeviled US forces” and “a measure of how difficult things have become in Iraq”, thus situating Fallujah as a city holding back positive development in the country.<sup>40</sup> An April 23, 2004 report described Fallujah as a “last stand” for elements of the old regime and the American administrator of Iraq, Paul Bremer, was quoted describing the rebels as former intelligence officials and republican guards who were some of Hussein’s best troops.<sup>41</sup> Crushing the resistance in Fallujah was therefore positioned as a rational part of the Americans’ original goal of removing Saddam Hussein and his supporters from power. As the April 23 item continues, shots of men in headscarves firing guns are shown with voiceover explaining that the worst of the rebels are now expected to have been pinned down in Fallujah and “wiping them out now might provide the best opportunity to break the back of the resistance.” In items on both April 14 and 19, 2004, unidentified

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<sup>37</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Ramadi/Nordland interview, CNN news, April 6, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Iraq/Uprising/Hostages/Fallujah/Troops, CNN news, April 14, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Iraq/Fallujah/An Insider’s View/Aerial Vehicles, CNN news, April 19, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> See Aaron Brown’s April 23, 2004 and April 28, 2004 reports, CNN news.

<sup>41</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, April 23, 2004.

men are also seen both in headscarves shooting around a corner and down a street and in crowds shouting anti-US slogans as US troops with guns drawn perform crowd control operations while riding in jeeps.<sup>42</sup> In both cases, US troops appear on the defensive while the Iraqis are portrayed as engaged in two types of violent activity, visibly demonstrating Fallujah's residents as 'problems' who are not easily distinguishable from 'insurgents'. Although these types of representations of Fallujahs will be analysed in depth in a further section, for the purposes of analysing Fallujah's image as a city it is important to recognise this frequent tendency to associate it with anti-Americanism, Islamic extremism and support for Saddam Hussein. These linkages are relevant both to the representation of the place and its people.

#### *A city backdrop for battle*

During both the April and November sieges of Fallujah, Gregory's comments on the reduction of the city to an object-space are obviously relevant. Much American newspaper coverage focused overwhelmingly on describing the experiences of American fighting troops; this coverage will be dealt with in a later section. Fallujah as a place tended to be reduced to a backdrop for the soldiers' activity, with its human elements downplayed. While *New York Times* coverage did frequently include residents' comments or, more commonly, statements of evacuees from Fallujah during the sieges, the articles' approach tended to focus on American tactics and the political ramifications of the violence. The November 2004 siege was viewed from a particularly Marine-centric viewpoint, with frequent comments on what had been learned from the earlier April attacks.

An April 14, 2004 *New York Times* article presents a common framework for reporting from Fallujah during the times of siege. The article is overwhelmingly a description of Marine-insurgent battles with comments from Marines on the ground. Fallujah is a depressing and dangerous backdrop for these encounters. Its streets are "a

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<sup>42</sup> See *Iraq/Uprising/Hostages/Fallujah/Troops...*, CNN news, April 14, 2004 and *Iraq/Fallujah/An Insider's View/Aerial Vehicles*, CNN news, April 19, 2004.

collage of ruin"; although the city is quiet, it is "ominously quiet" and "in an instant...bursts into a fully engulfed combat zone."<sup>43</sup> A subsequent article on April 15 makes similar statements. Fallujah is a "dusty city of monochromatic tan brick...a row of rooftops occupied by Marines look[s] down on garbage-strewn streets."<sup>44</sup> Images accompanying the *New York Times* articles throughout April 2004 follow the patterns in written coverage. The majority of descriptions obtained through Lexis Nexis outline pictures of American troops involved in various activities. Fewer images of Fallujan citizens were published, although one of these would appear to be quite 'graphic', showing dead Iraqis and abandoned cars, said to have approached a Marine position near Fallujah.<sup>45</sup> In most newspaper photos which could be viewed, however, the city of Fallujah is visible only as an often out-of-focus setting onto which the activities of the Marines are overlaid. (See Image 22)

The November siege followed the same format as April with articles that were highly descriptive of the fighting from the American side and of destruction to Fallujah itself. The effects of such destruction on the city's inhabitants were only speculated at, however, possibly because most Western media in Fallujah at this time were embedded with American military units and had no safe access to residents trapped indoors by the violence. Many of the descriptions during the earlier half of November suggested that most of Fallujah's population had fled the city, leaving only buildings and infrastructure for destruction:

Solely from a military standpoint, the operation redressed a disastrous assault on Fallujah last April that was called off when unconfirmed reports of large civilian casualties drove the political cost too high. This time, the Americans...pummeled a dark and mostly abandoned city defended only by a wraithlike band of insurgents who fired

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<sup>43</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Marines in Falluja Still Face and Return Relentless Fire", *The New York Times*, April 14, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Marines Use Low-Tech Skill to Kill 100 in Urban Battle", *The New York Times*, April 15, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> This image can be found with Gettleman, "Marines in Falluja Still Face and Return Relentless Fire". It was taken by Lynsey Addario of Corbis for *The New York Times*.



Kalashnikovs, mortars and rockets at the Americans and then fled into alleys and apartment blocks, only to reappear elsewhere.<sup>46</sup>

The apparent disappearance of civilians from the urban environment often seemed to be used as justification for the use of increased force against Fallujah's buildings and infrastructure, as it was assumed that only 'evil' insurgents would remain to face the American attack. Although the frequent discussion of the destruction wrought on Fallujah could be argued to be an attempt by reporters to make the violence and destruction they were seeing as 'real' as possible for readers, the fact that many of the operations took place at night and from the air meant that there was often very little available for observation or image generation. During both sieges, there was a reduction in the visibility of Fallujah; most 'views' of the city for both embedded reporters and military personnel came through the eye-pieces of weapons, via night-vision equipment or through satellite and computer-generated imagery. (See Image 20) Visually, Fallujah was thus also viewed with metaphorical and physical distance and detachment, its destruction a necessity due to the presence of 'terrorist' elements in its midst.

Discussions about the legitimacy of targeting a major hospital in Fallujah as part of American operations there were also tied to a broader framing of the city as a set of risks rather than as 'home'. Hospital reports had been a key way in which news of civilian casualties had emerged during the first siege of Fallujah in April. November reports in *The New York Times*, while not detailed, made it clear that US forces did not want this to happen again: "The offensive also shut down what officers said was a propaganda weapon for the militants: Falluja General Hospital, with its stream of reports of civilian casualties."<sup>47</sup> An earlier *New York Times* article, written during the height of the November battle, comments on the hospital in a similar way:

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<sup>46</sup> Dexter Filkins and James Glanz, "Rebels Routed in Falluja; Fighting Spreads Elsewhere", *The New York Times*, November 15, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Schmitt, "A Goal Is Met. What's Next?", *The New York Times*, November 15, 2004.

After two hours of steady pounding by American guns, tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and AC-130 gunships, at least one objective – a hospital about half a mile west of downtown Falluja- was secured by American Special Forces and the Iraqi 36<sup>th</sup> Commando Battalion...The hospital was selected as an early target because the American military believed that it was the source of rumors about heavy casualties. 'It's a center of propaganda,' a senior American officer said Sunday.<sup>48</sup>

The frame of reference for Fallujah's hospital in *The New York Times* coverage analysed is primarily a depiction of the hospital as a site of danger and 'propaganda'. Only one article comments that the seizure of the hospital has prevented the media from being able to show pictures of "bleeding women and children being taken into emergency wards".<sup>49</sup> There is no mention made of whether there were patients and staff at the hospital at the time of the attack, although American troops in front of the captured hospital are said to have taken heavy fire from insurgents. None of the articles analysed discuss the taking of the hospital as a contravention of the Geneva Conventions, a point of debate in other media during the conflict. The framework used by *The New York Times* serves to legitimize the targeting of the hospital. Other sources alleged that the action resulted in increased civilian deaths due to injured people not being able to reach or receive adequate treatment at the hospital.<sup>50</sup> As a military strategy, it appeared to succeed in minimizing the amount of information that could be released to the media regarding civilian casualties. During the April 2004 siege, Iraqi medical staff working for Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) were able to enter Fallujah. Dr. Abed Al-Ilah, a representative of the US-appointed Iraqi governing council, reported that many of those listed dead by Fallujah hospitals were women and children; a sizable proportion of these were said to have died from wounds which

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<sup>48</sup> Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Robert F. Worth, "GIs Open Attack To Take Falluja From Iraq Rebels", *The New York Times*, November 8, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, "Arab Response to Attacks Reveals Mixed Allegiances", *The New York Times*, November 11, 2004.

<sup>50</sup> As but one example, see the Iraq Body Count website, which provides documentation collected by journalists in Iraq in an attempt to calculate numbers of civilians being killed in conflict there since the start of the 2003 war, [http://www.iraqbodycount.org/resources/falluja/ibc\\_falluja\\_apr\\_20.php](http://www.iraqbodycount.org/resources/falluja/ibc_falluja_apr_20.php) (accessed July 10, 2007).

would have been treatable with timely medical attention.<sup>51</sup> During the November siege, civilian casualty information remained highly uncertain; there was no attempt made by US forces to calculate numbers.

During the November siege of Fallujah, the British newspapers analysed continued to produce more contextualizing articles than their American counterparts. There was a strong focus on the timing of the second 'battle for Fallujah', after George W. Bush had been successfully re-elected American president, and more reminders of why Fallujah had historically experienced a high level of tension with US forces, particularly the killing of civilian protestors. Greater amounts of interview material and quotes from Fallujan residents also helped to reduce the omnipotence of the reported statements by American military commanders. This alternative to strictly 'authority' voices will be explored in more depth in a coming section.

The depiction of Fallujah's hospital was also noticeably different in the British newspapers analysed versus American ones, consistent with a greater focus on the condition of Fallujan civilians found in British papers. An April 24, 2004 *Guardian* article reported that Marines had prevented access to Fallujah's only hospital for more than two weeks and an Iraqi doctor gave a lengthy description of horrible conditions inside the closed hospital. An Iraqi emergency coordinator for Medecins sans Frontieres was quoted saying that MSF "wanted an independent inquiry to determine why the US military used the hospital as a military position- a violation of the Geneva conventions."<sup>52</sup> In November 2004, the hospital's early seizure by American forces was also discussed in more depth in surveyed British coverage and again, unlike US coverage, the fact that this action could constitute a violation of the Geneva Conventions was mentioned: "Although Falluja general hospital, a small, poorly equipped facility on the western outskirts of the city, should have been protected under

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<sup>51</sup> See quotes from Ekklesia and Cockburn in Stephen Graham, "Remember Fallujah: Demonizing Place, Constructing Atrocity", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23 (2005): 3.

<sup>52</sup> Rory McCarthy, "Uneasy Truce In the City Of Ghosts: Rory McCarthy Talks to Survivors of the US Forces Assault On Falluja, The Bloodiest Battle of the Uprising, Which Doctors Say Killed Up to 600 Iraqis", *The Guardian*, April 24, 2004.

the Geneva conventions, it was deemed legitimate by US commanders because they said it had been taken over by insurgents."<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly, the seizure of the hospital was interpreted differently across a spectrum of British papers. *The Sunday Times'* reporting on the same event describes the takeover of the hospital as part of "softening up" procedures, since the hospital was suspected of being a "rebel command post". Mention is made of the fact that "50 fit young men suspected of pretending to be patients" were arrested.<sup>54</sup> On the same day, *The Observer* reported that: "One of the first actions of US troops...was to seize its [Fallujah's] general hospital to prevent what one US officer described as 'insurgent propaganda' over casualty figures."<sup>55</sup> While *The Sunday Times* includes information that appears to justify the American decision to seize the hospital, both *The Guardian* article in the previous paragraph and *The Observer* stress the problematic nature of the action under international law and, in the case of *The Observer*, use quotation marks to differentiate the views of American forces' commanders from the written 'voice' of the reporter.

The limitations of CNN coverage during the November 2004 siege is particularly obvious, largely due to an absence of images available for presentation with reports and to the restrictions on the network's embedded reporters. One of the few instances of 'live' filming during the November siege involved images of prisoners of war, who were filmed being blindfolded by Iraqi troops allied with the US as they lay prone in the captured hospital in Fallujah. This footage is contentious in itself given the American condemnations of the airing on al-Jazeera television of images of American prisoners in Iraq. The Americans themselves seemed to have few qualms about allowing media to film their Iraqi captives. Initially, the CNN report simply states over this footage that Fallujah's hospital was one of the first buildings US troops wanted to secure with no rationale given. At the end of the report, a US expert witness

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<sup>53</sup> Rory McCarthy, "Assault On Falluja: Go Kick Some Butt and Make History, Vietnam-Style, US Troops Urged", *The Guardian*, November 9, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Hala Jaber, "Showdown In The City of Snipers", *The Sunday Times*, November 14, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Beaumont, "Focus: Assault on Fallujah: The Final Battle?", *The Observer*, November 14, 2004.

explains that the hospital was an early target for the Marines because the medical staff at the hospital are former Ba'athists responsible for lying about mass casualties in the last Fallujah siege.<sup>56</sup> The coverage ends shortly after this point is made with no comment about the potential suffering of civilians caused by the hospital closure and without making the point, as is done in some British newspaper coverage, that such an act could be interpreted as a violation of the Geneva Conventions. US military frameworks of understanding, which viewed the hospital as a legitimate target for seizure, were thus accepted without question by CNN at this point. (See Image 25)

The examples above thus illustrate various ways in which Fallujah as a city became a backdrop, rather than a central point of discussion, during the American sieges. The city was rarely visually portrayed, likely due to media inability to gain safe access during the frequent nighttime attacks. The destruction happening within Fallujah was justified by reference to the need to completely wipe out insurgents, who were suggested to be the only people remaining in the city. As will be further elaborated in a later section, a choice was also made, mainly by American but also some British media, to devote story time and quotes to American troops and personnel, which had the effect of limiting discussion of Fallujah to militarized language of its risks as a battle site. In the specific case of Fallujah's hospital, the media surveyed, particularly American, often supported their military's explanation that the occupying of vital infrastructure was a battlefield necessity to stop 'propaganda'. Alternative understandings of this action appeared to be confined to British media such as *The Guardian* and *The Observer*.

#### *City of darkness: Fallujah as a 'terrorist nest'*

CNN coverage frequently used a combination of both sub-themes mentioned above, linking Fallujah to well-established 'enemies' of the US such as al-Qaeda militants and Saddam Hussein while also focusing predominantly on the experiences of US combat troops with minimal visual illustration of the devastation inflicted on

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<sup>56</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Anderson Interview, CNN news, November 8, 2004.

Fallujah by their actions. Coverage in late April 2004 continued to routinely sum up the situation in Fallujah as one which had to be resolved “decisively”, often explicitly interpreted to mean killing or capturing all ‘insurgents’ in the city, so that it could not remain “a symbol for Islam”.<sup>57</sup> Heavy and prolonged fighting in parts of Fallujah was attributed to the desperation of insurgents who were losing to US firepower. Iraqi outrage over the violence in Fallujah, however, led to an arranged pullout of US forces at the end of April and a turnover to Iraqi forces. After the withdrawal, coverage of Fallujah decreased but the city retained its reputation for danger and rebelliousness. It became known, as in earlier newspaper coverage, as an insurgent haven where militants had “unfettered control”. A guest journalist on CNN described the state of affairs in Fallujah during a June 24, 2004 interview: “We’re talking about Islamists now. Iraqi Islamists and a horde, an unknown number, of foreign Islamists. These men who aren’t necessarily al-Qaeda, some of them may be certainly inspired by al-Qaeda, they act like them, they share the same ideology. This is who now controls Fallujah.”<sup>58</sup>

Aaron Brown, CNN’s news anchor for the program, concluded after this report that the Fallujah area had become a “Taliban-like state”, where Islamic law was being practiced and brutal punishments meted out. A number of assumptions emerge from these types of indictments, namely that Fallujah is unable to function as a compliant city in Western terms. It is instead linked to violence against Western forces, either through the actions of Saddam-supporters or through radical Islamists. The associations made in the above statements with al-Qaeda and the Taliban can also help to link Fallujah in viewers’ minds with other declared enemies of the US whose elimination had been frequently deemed necessary. Some more extreme American commentators, such as Ralph Peters in *The New York Post*, summed up this particular view openly, although it is implicit in other coverage as well: “Now we need to finish the job swiftly, no matter the cost in death and destruction, before the will of our civilian leaders weakens again. Stopping even one building short of the annihilation of

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<sup>57</sup> This was a quote from Senator Jay Rockefeller in item- Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf, CNN news, April 25, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Iraq/Reporter’s Notebook/Ware Interview, CNN news, June 24, 2004. Michael Ware is a *Time* magazine reporter who was embedded with US troops in Fallujah.

the terrorists and insurgents would be a defeat...By quitting in April, we created the terrorist city-state of Fallujah. Now we need to shut it down for good.”<sup>59</sup>

In November, CNN reported this instrumental and militaristic view as the explicit goal of the US military, now with the backing of the Iraqi governing council. Jamie McIntyre commented that the US and Iraqi government had an agreement to finish the battle in Fallujah this time “no matter how messy it gets.”<sup>60</sup> Continued US bombing of Fallujah during the summer months between the two sieges was justified through ongoing portrayals of the city as harbouring ‘evil’ forces that required swift destruction. A July 8, 2004 CNN report used the often-recycled footage of head-scarf-clad men firing guns in dilapidated streets immediately followed by a much-used face shot of the al-Qaeda figure Musab al-Zarqawi, described to be the world’s most wanted terrorist, who was alleged to be using Fallujah as a base.<sup>61</sup>

As has been touched on in the discussion above, the use of specific metaphors and meaning-loaded words in reports on Fallujah often could be seen as prompting viewers to specific understandings about the nature of events in the city. The use of militarized vocabulary, a feature of some newspaper articles, was also common in CNN television coverage during both sieges and led to a more subtle means of positioning Fallujah as a city destined to require violent subjugation. Complementing this vocabulary was a disappearance of the city as anything other than an obstacle to military takeover, presenting dangerous challenges to incoming troops. “Pacification” is described as the “unlikely” word for the combination of deadly force and good deeds that the Marines will allegedly perform in Fallujah in response to the attacks. Shots of the burning contractor SUVs are shown as this announcement is made to re-emphasize the reason for the attacks. These images then switch to ones showing US troops

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<sup>59</sup> Ralph Peters, “Finishing Fallujah”, *The New York Post* online edition, November 9, 2004, <http://www.nypost.com/postopinion/opedcolumnists/33712.htm> (accessed November 25, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Iraq/Fallujah offensive/Anderson interview, CNN news, November 8, 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, CNN news, July 8, 2004.

performing day and nighttime training exercises as US General Mark Kimmit states that Marines in Fallujah “will be methodical, precise and overwhelming”.<sup>62</sup>

By the end of October 2004, the second battle for Fallujah, “the mother of all battles” as it was called, was being planned. CNN reports on these preparations reflected what was to be the overwhelming focus of the upcoming battle: American troops. Repetitive images of troops assembling weapons, riding in tanks and jeeps and discussing their feelings about the coming battle dominated the coverage. Fallujah was literally reduced to a ‘sandbox’ model, which Marines are pictured clustered around at their base, learning the city’s terrain. The comment is made that US troops are developing strategies based on Russian experiences in attacking the Chechen city of Grozny, which was almost completely destroyed by Russian shelling and bombing amid widespread accusations of human rights abuses.<sup>63</sup> A report a few days later, entitled “Falluja in the Crosshairs”, showed only one shot of a mosque in Fallujah from rooftop level; all other imagery of the city was either through night vision devices, which provide only fuzzy green and black images, or from high-flying aircraft.<sup>64</sup> The use of high aerial shots of Fallujah continued throughout the siege until troop actions in the city began to subside in mid to late November.

The reduction of ‘live’ coverage throughout the November assault on Fallujah meant that CNN increasingly relied on earlier-recorded images of US troops and on ‘experts’, particularly retired US generals, who were often brought in to give interviews on the unseen Marine progress. One former general who discussed the importance of clearing Fallujah and then holding ground in the city to keep terrorists “rooted out” on a house-by-house basis utilized three dimensional images of troops comparable to a video game. This particular series of images provides little to nothing in the way of additional explanation or clarification of his points but appears designed to fill visual time and space as the general speaks.<sup>65</sup> CNN was often honest about the obstacles it

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<sup>62</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, CNN news, July 8, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, October 31, 2004.

<sup>64</sup> Iraq/Fallujah offensive/Allam Interview, CNN news, November 5, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Iraq/Fallujah offensive/Murray Interview, CNN news, November 6, 2004.



faced in attempting to report on Fallujah; these obstacles involved a lack of access to images and potential stories throughout the siege periods. On November 8, 2004, CNN's Aaron Brown opened his program by declaring that the night's news would involve some facts but not analysis, as there was simply no way to get information other than from embeds as the Marines entered Fallujah. Even the embedded reporter interviewed could barely be heard over the noise of weapon-fire; she informed viewers that military restrictions limited what she could report to the public. The only 'live' images available were those of tanks firing next to the reporter and smoke rising from buildings in the distance, presumably Fallujah. (See Image 23) General Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld were interviewed and older, stock shots of US troops kicking in house doors and charging with guns were shown in an effort to represent a current situation that could not be easily witnessed or imaged by journalists.<sup>66</sup>

This section suggests that representations of Fallujah as an "object-space" full of danger and risk, rather than as a populated city containing crucial infrastructure, were developed through a variety of strategies. In terms of discourses presented, Fallujah was linked to a tradition of resistance to governmental authority and frequently described as a Sunni bastion of support for Saddam Hussein. The Islamic piety of city residents was used as a means of tying them to other, problematic Muslim extremist groups who were openly enemies of the US state, such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Visual representation of the city, particularly when it came under American siege, was minimal; keeping these images to a minimum often appeared to be a US military goal. A variety of negative associations were thus used to create a largely unseen enemy for well-documented and imaged American troops, who, as will be seen in a further section, were often presented as the key protagonists in the Fallujah siege story. Absent from these coverage patterns is any sense of civilian life in Fallujah. Imagery of Fallujan civilians and quoting of their perspectives on the violence in their city are also

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<sup>66</sup> Iraq/Fallujah offensive/Anderson interview, CNN news, November 8, 2004.

very rare in some coverage sources. The following section will explore this coverage omission in depth.

*New Orleans meets Fallujah: shared discourses of 'war zone' cities*

An example of the pervasiveness of American domestic discourses similar to those used in Fallujah and Somalia will be considered at this juncture, between discussions of the representation of Fallujah as a place and of Fallujans as people. This comparative moment resembles that of the Rodney King incident with representations of Somali men and boys in the previous chapter. The setting for these familiar discourses, similar to the King incident with events in Somalia, was America near the time of the Fallujah incidents. Media representation of Hurricane Katrina, which struck the Gulf coast of America on August 29, 2005, frequently called upon metaphors directly taken from US experiences in Iraq. Kathleen Tierney and her fellow authors outline how events were reported:

(I)nitial media coverage of Katrina's devastating impacts was quickly replaced by reporting that characterized disaster victims as opportunistic looters and violent criminals and that presented individual and group behavior following the Katrina disaster through the lens of civil unrest. Later, narratives shifted again and began to metaphorically represent the disaster-stricken city of New Orleans as a war zone and to draw parallels between conditions in the city and urban insurgency in Iraq. These media frames helped guide and justify actions undertaken by military and law enforcement entities that were assigned responsibility for the postdisaster emergency response. The overall effect of media coverage was to further bolster arguments that only the military is capable of effective action during disasters.<sup>67</sup>

As Tierney et. al. suggest, the linkage of New Orleans with Iraqi cities as places of danger, destruction and violence did not only have discursive effects on how New Orleans was conceptualised but also had material impacts. Stephen Graham points out

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<sup>67</sup> Kathleen Tierney, Christine Bevc and Erica Kuligowski, "Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina", *The Annals of the American Academy* 604 (March 2006): 60-61.

some tangible impacts on a broader scale when he describes ways in which 'war on terror' discourses had already resulted in the privileging of certain governmental programs over others. In some cases, budget cuts in natural disaster preparedness programs in and around the Gulf coast of America can be directly linked to increases in spending on 'homeland security' programs, which prioritised the risk of 'terrorist' disasters over that of natural ones, and to the costs of the war in Iraq.<sup>68</sup>

Like the situations in Fallujah and Somalia, discursive distinctions were drawn between 'innocent' victims of the disasters and those deemed to be opportunistically profiting from them. In the case of Katrina, these divisions routinely were made along racialized and gendered lines, with young, African American men most commonly identified as violent 'looters' in much the same way that Somali men were frequently represented as gun-toting thugs and Fallujan men were portrayed as potential Islamic extremists and insurgents. Such discourses, along with those which suggested that urban unrest was rife in parts of New Orleans, were unsubstantiated by evidence and tarred all members of the already disproportionately deprived African American community in the region with the same broad brush stroke. They also, according to Tierney et. al., resulted in post-disaster actions which placed more emphasis on policing and anti-looting efforts than on continued search and rescue missions, leading to a possible greater loss of lives.<sup>69</sup>

As suggested above, discourses surrounding these policing efforts are particularly obvious in their ties to events in Iraq, with references to "urban combat", "insurgents" and "war zone" being common in media quotes from military personnel and politicians working in the American Gulf area.<sup>70</sup> The insinuations made by many of these discourses are that the displaced, suffering citizens of New Orleans were people who required a strong, military hand to avert them from their socially-destructive urges. Like Somalis and Iraqis, these 'other' people were portrayed as the

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<sup>68</sup> Stephen Graham, "'Homeland' Insecurities?: Katrina and the Politics of 'Security' in Metropolitan America", *Space and Culture* 9, No. 1 (February 2006): 2.

<sup>69</sup> Tierney, "Metaphors Matter", 68.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 71.

'less-than-civilised', who were incapable of helping themselves and required aggressive management, as opposed to a host of other possible approaches. Tierney et. al. note that it took some time before the American media began to critique their own coverage of Katrina, and before a few began to discuss the socio-economics of a situation where poor, African American communities could be so disproportionately effected by the disaster.<sup>71</sup> With this brief comparison in mind, this chapter will now investigate the representation of Fallujan citizens.

### **Fallujan Citizens: Seldom Seen, Rarely Heard**

The 2004 media coverage of Fallujans, and others associated with the city, varied considerably in terms of the emphasis placed on the experiences of citizens during different phases of the violence. As mentioned above, there are many possible reasons for these variations. After the contractor killings, Fallujah remained a dangerous area for Westerners to travel and Western media were often dependent on the work of Arab and Iraqi freelancers to obtain stories and images from the region. With few exceptions, journalists who went into Fallujah during the April and November sieges were embedded with American military units and thus were limited in where and how they could report. While there were attempts to explore the reasons for the violence in most media coverage, these efforts were often limited to American and British official opinions, with occasional quotes from Iraqi governors. Throughout the coverage analysed, there appears to be a relatively consistent difference in styles of coverage across the newspaper field, with *The Guardian* giving the most column space to presenting the views of Iraqi and Fallujan citizens while *The New York Times* tended to focus more on presenting a political and strategic view of the violence from a generally American standpoint. When space is given to individual comment, *The New York Times* often turns to the views of US troops on the ground in April and November or to officials' quotes. Other analysed newspapers alternate between these two generalized approaches.

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<sup>71</sup> Tierney, "Metaphors Matter", 74.

The visual representations of people involved in the Fallujah events offer even less variety than the textual approaches. Both CNN coverage of the violence and analysed newspaper photographs show the conflict overwhelmingly from the perspective of the US military forces involved. Images of Iraqis, when shown with reference to Fallujah, are predominately recycled shots from the incident of the contractor killings and generic footage of 'insurgents' in headscarves firing weapons. Footage of civilian life is quite rare, as are images of dead bodies- either those of civilians or those of US troops. (See Image 24 as exception to this) 'Insurgent', enemy bodies were occasionally shown, most commonly during the two siege periods on Fallujah. As Gregory notes, this absence of bodies in much Western media coverage is one of the major differences from the coverage in Arab-language media:

The Pentagon's war without bodies was in stark contrast to the war seen by the Arab world. Arabic newspapers and news channels showed the bloody victims of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the overwhelming grief of ordinary families who had been caught up in the violence of the war...In the eyes of the Pentagon al-Jazeera was 'cinematic agitprop against American Central Command's Hollywood news producers,' and on several occasions coalition forces took offensive action against its offices and staff, and against other so-called 'unilateral' journalists who were supposedly reporting 'from the enemy side'.<sup>72</sup>

This dichotomy in the representation of the Iraq war, and the violence in Fallujah in particular, has likely had significant repercussions on the already fragile relations between American and Islamic communities. While bombings and losses of life in Iraq were regularly summarized in newspaper and in TV coverage, American audiences were rarely confronted with graphic images of the human tragedies caused by the Iraq invasion. With some important exceptions, stories of civilian suffering were primarily confined to Arab language media and were not common in Western coverage during the Fallujah events. (See Image 26) Gregory uses the work of Jonathan Raban and Lawrence Rosen to suggest that images of the pain and suffering of fellow Muslims

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<sup>72</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 208.

likely had a particularly profound influence on viewers who shared this faith;

*"Geographical distance from the site of the invasion hardly seems to dull the impact of this bodily assault. It's no wonder the call of the ummah effortlessly transcends the flimsy national boundaries of the Middle East'... This way of seeing- and being in- the world involves a radically different conception of the self to the autonomous individual constructed under the sign of European modernity."*<sup>73</sup>

As was briefly discussed in this chapter's introduction, there seems to be little doubt that Western politicians and senior military personnel feared the potentially powerful and demoralizing effects that they believed seeing dead civilians or Western military personnel could have on Western publics, as well as Muslim viewers. As David Campbell suggests in an article discussing the use of images of death and suffering, the legacy of Vietnam War images is likely of key importance here. Infamous images of the summary execution of a Viet Cong suspect and of a young, naked Vietnamese girl fleeing a napalm attack are widely thought of as having influenced American public opinion of the fighting there. Since Vietnam, and most obviously since the 1991 Gulf War, American administrations have often attempted to control media access to sites of conflict.<sup>74</sup> In the case of some Arab-language media, such as al-Jazeera, there is some suggestion that these attempts went beyond limiting journalistic access to various areas and people and actually extended to military attacks on the station's offices in Baghdad and Kabul as punishment for al-Jazeera's focus on the human costs of US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> It is the contention of this section that official, and to an extent media, acceptance of the theory that dead civilians would equal decreasing American and Iraqi support for the invasion resulted in a disappearance of civilians from much discussion and imagery of the Fallujah conflict and their occasional replacement by discussion of dangerous 'insurgents' in the

<sup>73</sup> Gregory, partially quoting Raban, in *The Colonial Present*, 209. Italics are Gregory's own.

<sup>74</sup> See David Campbell, "Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media", *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, no. 1, (January 2004): 59-60.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Jazeera's Baghdad offices were bombed in April 2003, directly leading to the death of a journalist. The station's Kabul offices were hit by two 'smart' bombs in 2001, nearly destroying the nearby BBC offices as well. John Plunkett, "Bush Claim Revives al-Jazeera Bombing Fears", November 23, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1648988,00.html> (accessed June 11, 2007).

city. American Marines and military personnel were largely used instead to provide the 'human' element to the siege periods, providing quotable material and functioning as the primary protagonists. Unsurprisingly, this focus on American personnel was more pronounced in US media coverage. British coverage, especially *Guardian* articles, gave more space to the views of Iraqi civilians and thus was often able to challenge some of the US government's favoured presentation of the US attack as a bloodless, humanitarian mission to 'save' Fallujah from insurgents.

*A limited portrait of Ba'athists and Islamic extremism*

Media discussion of the deaths of the contractors in March 2004 provides an important starting point for exploring various sources' representation of Fallujans during this event. On the day of the attacks, most articles contained in-depth descriptions of the grisly nature of the violence. This Associated Press article is broadly representative of American newspaper reports on the killings and includes most of the descriptions also featured in other papers:

In a scene reminiscent of Somalia, frenzied crowds dragged the burned, mutilated bodies of four American contractors through the streets of a town west of Baghdad on Wednesday and strung two of them up from a bridge after rebels ambushed their SUVs...After the attack, a jubilant crowd of civilians, none of whom appeared to be armed, gathered to celebrate, dragging the bodies through the street and hanging two of them from the bridge. Many of those in the crowd were excited young boys who shouted slogans in front of television cameras. Associated Press Television News pictures showed one man beating a charred corpse with a metal pole...The White House blamed terrorists and remnants of Saddam Hussein's former regime for the 'horrific attacks' on the American contractors.<sup>76</sup>

This quote illustrates the graphic description applied to the situation, with words like "frenzied" and "jubilant" indicating the mood of the crowds, whom readers are told are civilians, rather than 'armed' insurgents. Description in text and voiceover, with

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<sup>76</sup> Sameer N. Yacoub, "Bodies of Four American Contractors Dragged Through Streets of Fallujah; Bomb Kills Five US Troops", *The Associated Press*, March 31, 2004.

televised footage supporting it, portrays the main perpetrators of the attack as men and boys, who apparently seem proud of their actions, flaunting them before television cameras. Interestingly, the White House is said to blame “terrorists” and “remnants of Saddam Hussein’s former regime” for the attacks despite evidence that unarmed civilians were involved in much of the event. This begs the question of who the ‘enemy’ actually is in this situation in much the same way as in the attacks on the Black Hawk helicopters in Mogadishu. Linkages between these two events, as hinted at in the above quote, will be explored in more depth in a further concluding chapter.

American General Mark Kimmitt and Senior Advisor Dan Senor appeared at a press conference later on March 31, 2004 to attempt to clarify the issue of who the ‘enemy’ was for the American contractors, and by extension for all Americans in Iraq. General Kimmitt distinguished ‘good’ from ‘bad’ civilians, yet declared the entire city to be a “Ba’athist stronghold”, thus partly contradicting his attempt to absolve many ‘normal’ citizens of responsibility for the violence: “Fallujah remains one of those cities in Iraq that just don’t get it. It’s a former Ba’athist stronghold. This was a city that profited immeasurably under the former regime...It is a small minority of the people in Fallujah. Most of the people in Fallujah want to move on with their lives...want to be part of a new Iraq.”<sup>77</sup>

Dan Senor followed on from Kimmitt’s comments to stress the deviance of those involved in the attacks:

(T)he people who pulled those bodies out and engaged in this attack against the contractors are not people we are here to help. They are people who have a much different vision for the future of Iraq than the overwhelming majority of Iraqis...They are people who want Iraq to turn back to an era of mass graves, of rape rooms and torture chambers and chemical attacks. They want to turn back to the era of Saddam Hussein.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “Deputy Director For Coalition Operations Hosts News Conference On Security Operations In Iraq”, *State News Service*, US Department of Defense issued transcript, March 31, 2004.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



Those who participated in the contractor attacks are thus directly associated with support for the Hussein regime and are portrayed as engaging in desperate attacks to thwart the creation of a democratic Iraq. *New York Times* coverage of the killings on April 1, 2004 utilizes many similar descriptors, highlighting the fact that “Falluja’s streets were thick with men and boys and chaos” and describing in detail the destruction of the SUVs and the desecration of the bodies. A much-used photo of Iraqi men cheering in front of two burnt bodies suspended from a bridge was published beside this article on the front page. The article closes with Fallujans again being associated with strong anti-Americanism and support for Hussein.<sup>79</sup>

*The New York Times* did, however, provide voice to some alternative framings of the Fallujah situation. It published an article the following day which described the disgust of many Fallujans at the desecration of the bodies despite their support for the attack. Many expressed fears that the publication of such images would portray the city in a wholly negative light. An interviewed Fallujan man differentiates the insurgents who shot at the SUVs and killed the contractors from those who later desecrated the bodies, insisting that the insurgents would not have approved of the un-Islamic practice of desecrating the dead.<sup>80</sup> These comments are important, as they illustrate some Fallujans’ disapproval of the US presence in their city without necessarily equating this disapproval with irrationality, barbarity or support for the Hussein regime. This particular frame of understanding allows for recognition of the desire of many Iraqis to govern themselves and their refusal to accept the binary choice of either supporting the Americans or Saddam Hussein. While it is not explored in analysed coverage, further comments in this article comments also hint at the importance and influence of mosque and kin-based citizen support networks in Iraq, which had become particularly well-developed during the post-Gulf War I deterioration of Iraqi state services. Understanding these support networks outside the

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<sup>79</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “4 From US Killed In Ambush In Iraq; Mob Drags Bodies”, *The New York Times*, April 1, 2004.

<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Mix of Pride and Shame Follows Killings and Mutilation By Iraqis”, *The New York Times*, April 2, 2004.

framework of potential creations and perpetuations of Islamic fundamentalism was especially difficult for American interveners in Iraq.

Another *New York Times* article on April 11, 2004, as the first siege of Fallujah began, discusses and quotes Iraqis on the surge of anti-Americanism that the attacks on Fallujah have caused in civilians across Iraq.<sup>81</sup> This report helps to contextualize Iraqi sentiments by allowing them to describe the changed, and often tragic, events in their lives following the US occupation. Iraqi civilians thus appear less as irrational and violent crowds of killers and more as citizens with some grounds for dissatisfaction. The point is also made that civilians can and in some cases will turn to violence to protest US military and political actions, thereby bringing into question the clear insurgent/civilian dichotomy described earlier by General Kimmitt and Dan Senor.

CNN television footage only occasionally represented Fallujan citizens as people with potential grounds for complaint at their treatment by American forces. Particularly during the siege periods, reporters' embedded positions with the US military meant that their distance from Fallujan citizens was obvious both physically and in terms of their narrative approaches to the situation. Immediately after the deaths of the contractors, edited images were shown of the attack with the preface that these "pictures speak of chaos, cruelty and the past"<sup>82</sup>; viewers are later told that there are some images that won't be shown but that some are necessary "to illustrate the extent of the violence". As a map of Iraq is shown on screen, locating Baghdad and Fallujah, voiceover describes the attacks. Interestingly, the only visual image over this description for a few seconds is a blurred shot of two burning SUVs. As the voiceover declares "these Iraqis seemed to revel in mutilating and displaying the dead bodies", images of men yelling at a camera are shown. Viewers are told that the men are screaming "Fallujah is the graveyard of Americans". The anchor then announces, "The blood and sacrifice this day was from four civilian contractors, come to Iraq to try to

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<sup>81</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Anti-US Outrage Unites a Growing Iraqi Resistance", *The New York Times*, April 11, 2004.

<sup>82</sup> The following quotations are all taken from Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, Habbaniyah, CNN news, March 31, 2004.

rebuild this country.” Fallujah’s civilians as a whole are thus symbolized by the crowd of angry men, doing unwatchable things to the bodies of those who are presented as only trying to help them.

This particular framework offers no space for the possibility that the contractors might be viewed as invaders and perpetrators of violence to Iraqi civilians. Voiceover then explains that the corpses were dragged through the streets and hung over a bridge; at this point, viewers are given a single, distant shot of two blackened corpses hanging from a bridge. The substantial verbal aspect of this initial coverage is crucial to its understanding, partly because of a lack of continuity in the heavily-edited images of the attack. The imagery then switches suddenly to two Western experts, there to place the previous events in context. These US officials, General Kimmitt and Dan Senor, blame “insurgent” forces for the attack. As in the newspaper coverage, perpetrators of the attack are described as being motivated by support for Saddam Hussein; there is no acknowledgement of past problems with the American military in Fallujah such as the killing of demonstrators.

The next day coverage of the “aftermath” of the attacks continued with edited shots of the attacks repeated. Although the attacks are said to be a “harsh reality for the good people of Fallujah”, voiceover explains that other Iraqis have allegedly said that the US should not be surprised by the attacks since Fallujah harbours known supporters of Saddam Hussein. Paul Bremer, the US administrator in Iraq, and General Kimmitt are shown and quoted calling the attack “despicable” and “bestial” and promising punishment for the killings. Shots of the burning SUVs are shown yet again as voiceover explains that the US will no longer rely on “poorly-trained and ill-equipped” Iraqi forces to secure Fallujah. Although there is a brief image of Iraqi children in schools with explanation of the importance for the US in winning the hearts and minds of Iraqi civilians, the item concludes that Marines in Fallujah must somehow mix violence with acts of kindness.<sup>83</sup> US military action in Fallujah is thus presented as inevitable and the weight of emphasis in the item is placed on the parameters of a

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<sup>83</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, Baghdad, CNN news, April 1, 2004.

military incursion with only very brief mention of the importance of gaining local support.

An April 2, 2004 CNN item the following day helps to consolidate viewer understanding of the Fallujan population as a dangerous 'Islamic' threat to US forces.<sup>84</sup> The item opens with shots of Iraqi men at prayer; a sheikh in the mosque is said to condemn the mutilation of the contractors' bodies but not their murder. Over rare shots of chador-clad women in a market, a voiceover states, "in the city, defiance, people promising the city will become a graveyard of Americans." This shot is then immediately followed by an image of Shi'a men marching in the streets of Baghdad carrying placards; clerics are shown denouncing the US as the 'Great Satan' to large audiences. Although the fact that the third set of images is filmed in Baghdad is mentioned, the opening of the item with discussion of Fallujah could lead many viewers to associate all of the above shots with generalized hatred of Fallujans for America. The imagery of prayer, sheikhs preaching and chador-clad women is combined with voiceover which associates statements of hatred and violence against the US with these visible signs of Islam. Iraqi civilians are 'othered' by their faith and, by reference to the term 'Great Satan', associated with the traditions of anti-Americanism in their theocratic neighbor Iran.

As the first US incursion into Fallujah began, CNN's coverage overwhelmingly became the story of the experiences of US troops in the city. Insurgents were imaged occasionally as 'enemy' figures, while civilians largely disappeared altogether from coverage. On April 6, 2004<sup>85</sup>, as US troop incursions into Fallujah increased, images of 'Arab' men waving guns and with headscarves obscuring their faces were briefly shown with voiceover comments stating that these men were likely Ba'athist sympathizers. As voiceover continued to describe reports that militants were roaming the streets of Fallujah, the same shot was repeated. After alternating a shot of US troops talking by a vehicle, Iraqi men are shown chanting and running in a street;

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<sup>84</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, CNN news, April 2, 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Ramadi/Nordland Interview, CNN news, April 6, 2004.

voiceover again explains that despite US claims of control, many cities are in fact run by “radical clerics”. Shortly after this clip, Iraqis, including sobbing women, are shown in a funeral procession with voiceover claiming that they want to know why Iraqi civilians are being killed. The item then ends with no explanation for this loss of life. Although Marines are earlier said to be attacking Fallujah in response to the killing of the contractors, the only shots of Marines show them talking by a vehicle. A Marine is quoted saying “we did numerous community service projects in this neighborhood, now we’re trying to find out why we’re being shot at.” While the Marines are portrayed as non-violent and merely trying to help Iraqis who are in turn attacking them, Iraqis in general, and by assumption Fallujan citizens, are visually depicted as predominately involved in violence or as hysterical and irrational. There is no visual linkage made between the US military activity in Fallujah and the deaths of civilians.

The representation of Fallujans and Iraqis did not change dramatically as time went on. April 14, 2004 CNN footage showed masked men shooting around corners against a background of destroyed concrete as well as middle-aged men aiming a machine gun down a street.<sup>86</sup> (See Image 27 for example) A brief shot of Iraqis, including women, fleeing what appear to be attacks or bombings is shown interspersed with shots of Marines in action but no voiceover explanation of this shot is given. An interview at the end of the item addresses the radically different presentation of the Iraqi situation in the Arab media, where images of injured women and children are regularly shown. Rod Nordland, the CNN interviewee, acknowledges that such a distinction makes Iraqi lives appear unimportant in the US. He argues, however, that because the Western media are often denied access to certain areas due to the dangers of travel there is no way to challenge these Arab media accounts which are so fervently believed by many in the Islamic world. The way in which this issue is addressed works to shape its understanding. The assumption appears to be that, should Western media be able to gain access to conflict-ridden regions in Iraq, they would likely find that Arab media had overstated the case of civilian casualties. While the possibility of Iraqi

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<sup>86</sup> Iraq/Uprising/Hostages/Fallujah/Troops, CNN news, April 14, 2004.

civilian casualties is not ignored, there is an assumption that the objectivity of the Western media is required to confirm this fact.

Throughout April, stock footage of men in headscarves firing guns or in chanting crowds appeared at regular intervals in analysed coverage, interspersed with much more frequent imagery of US troops firing on grey/brown collections of buildings which viewers were told was Fallujah. While there was an effort in an "Insider's View" item to present viewers with some of the initial issues which led to violence between Fallujans and US troops, visual representation of Fallujans remains confined primarily to men in 'aggressive' activities. Analysis of the situation is conducted from the position of American troops and their leaders, with Fallujan civilians considered only to the extent that their alienation from American troops could lead to increased support for the insurgents. Footage of Fallujan civilians with their own comments provided only began to appear months after the first assault on the city, in July 2004. A July 5 item contains images of men digging through rubble and standing in a crater where a 4500 lb American bomb is said to have been dropped as part of US attacks on the Fallujah safehouses of al-Qaeda leader Musab al-Zarqawi. In interviews, some Fallujan civilians claim that the dead were ordinary people, and images of ambulances and a blood-splattered wall are also shown.<sup>87</sup> A September 17, 2004 CNN item also provided rare interviews with Iraqis, who condemn the continued American attacks on Fallujah. Clerics are shown preaching against the attacks and some brief and unusual footage is shown of bombed areas of Fallujah, a covered dead body and two injured children in hospital.<sup>88</sup> (See Image 21 for less 'graphic' example)

In the run-up to the American decision to attack Fallujah a second time, on this occasion with help from Iraqi governing council forces, CNN began to broadcast more sceptical coverage, which questioned some American military actions. An October 11<sup>89</sup> item presented images from the cockpit of an American aircraft as it bombed a running crowd in Fallujah. Debate was presented over whether the group was made up of

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<sup>87</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Air Strike/Hassoun Kidnap, CNN news, July 5, 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Baghdad/Fallujah, CNN news, September 17, 2004.

<sup>89</sup> Iraq/Fallujah/Air Strike/Cockpit Video, CNN news, October 11, 2004.

insurgents or civilians and, although the article's conclusion is that US forces followed the correct rules of engagement, the item did serve to question American conduct, a rare occurrence in analysed CNN coverage. As the November battle plans began, however, CNN returned to a style of coverage reminiscent of the April attack. An Iraqi representative for the governing council is quoted claiming that Fallujah civilians want insurgents to be driven out of Fallujah and scarved men with guns are again shown with a voiceover claim that thousands of insurgents are preparing defenses in Fallujah. Although the US troop shooting of demonstrators is again mentioned over a montage of shots provided to give background to the current situation in Fallujah, the accompanying visuals are yet again the burning SUVs of the contractors and men yelling with guns drawn. The choice to repeat this footage, rather than the US bombing of Fallujah or its aftermath, lends itself once more to the portrayal of Fallujah as a place predominately populated by anti-American extremists; it also triggers viewer memories of violence against US citizens.<sup>90</sup> As has been suggested above, the media may well have been largely prevented from getting footage from inside Fallujah because of the dangers of travel and the embed system. While there are many reasons for the resulting limited coverage of Iraqi civilians, these gaps have likely had significant effects on how Western viewers understood the Fallujah conflict. Casualty statistics, when reported throughout the November attack, covered US troops dead and injured and estimates of dead insurgents; no mention of civilians is made.<sup>91</sup>

As was the case with the newspaper coverage of the November 2004 attack, a CNN item also characterized Fallujah as a "ghost town", suggesting that most civilians and insurgents had fled. Nevertheless, shots of red and black scarved men with guns were again presented in a following shot, giving audiences a look at America's enemies. Later in the item, a brief shot appears of Iraqi men walking in a destroyed street waving a white flag. Seconds later, after this image changes to one of American troops shooting over a rooftop wall, embedded reporter Jane Arraf explains that her group of Marines

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<sup>90</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Allam Interview, CNN news, November 5, 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Assault, CNN news, November 11, 2004.

has encountered no civilians. There is no explanation of the image of flag-waving men.<sup>92</sup> An item on the same day by reporter Scott Peterson also states that he has seen more dead insurgents than live civilians. Images of civilians follow, however, as Peterson explains that most of the civilians which his Marine group has encountered are men who have been left to guard homes after they were forbidden to leave the city by US forces. The accompanying images show men sitting nervously on the floor with their hands up; Marines with guns drawn move around them.<sup>93</sup>

The first shots of any sustained length of Fallujan civilians seen in analysed CNN coverage were on November 18, 2004 after much of the fighting in Fallujah had ceased and Marines had begun a clean up operation throughout the city. These shots came at the end of a news item which focused primarily on evidence US soldiers had found of Iraqi insurgent hideouts in Fallujah. The suggestion at the end of this first segment was that Fallujan civilians had been expelled from many areas of Fallujah weeks in advance of the American assault when insurgents took over. The implications of this assertion appeared to be that there were no civilians in the area to be injured during the violence. Shots of families, including young children, being evacuated from Fallujah at the time of the item's filming, however, are then shown, seemingly contradicting this suggestion. These images involved people being placed on the back of trucks and driven out of the city centre. Some images were also shown of men loading wrapped corpses into and out of trucks, with explanation that some civilians were being asked to assist with the collection and burial of bodies found in Fallujah.<sup>94</sup> A later item on November 26, 2004 showed the beginnings of further relief work in the city, with a Red Crescent truck pictured driving in damaged, deserted streets and men in red vests delivering aid supplies. Brief shots appeared of aid workers venturing into a house to talk to a Fallujan family who had survived the second assault and further images of armed Marines patrolling Fallujan streets showed civilians cautiously emerging from damaged houses.

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<sup>92</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Assault/Anderson Interview, CNN news, November 10, 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Segment 7 (Staying Alive), CNN news, November 10, 2004.

<sup>94</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, November 18, 2004.



Throughout CNN coverage, the use of voiceover remained a powerful technique for directing viewer interpretation of images, many of which were repeated; there was little or no dialogue with those being filmed. While shots of civilians were occasionally included in news items, they frequently lacked explanation or were peripheral to heavily-emphasized narratives of US troop experiences in Fallujah. As Gregory points out with reference to general Iraq media coverage: "For the most part, it was only when the bombing, fighting, and killing were supposed to be over that Iraq's ordinary inhabitants were recognized."<sup>95</sup> Evident in the abovementioned CNN item, shots of civilians only began to emerge in this set of analysed coverage after the November American attack on Fallujah was over. Civilians are used at this point as symbols of the city coming back to life but, due to the use of voiceover, they are not given the opportunity to describe their experiences during the siege. This is precisely the period during which people such as themselves were generally alleged not to even have existed in Fallujah. CNN in this sense fails to challenge the American government's narrative of a siege with minimal risk to civilians. Visual evidence which appears to contradict government claims is shown but neither discussed nor elaborated; consequently, it may in many cases have been overlooked by viewers.

*'Disappeared': casualty counts and civilian opinions*

As was touched upon in the previous section, stories and imagery of American troops were routinely covered by much of the Western media while discussion and pictures regarding Fallujans and the state of the city as a whole, especially during the siege periods, was minimal in many publications. US soldiers tended to be portrayed as bravely executing their urban combat training against dangerous and elusive enemies. The possibility that harsher tactics and the consequent likelihood of civilian deaths could become a rallying point against the American forces was recognised but this issue was only occasionally touched upon in American media coverage. A March 27, 2004 *New York Times* article mentions that "renewed fighting seemed to generate

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<sup>95</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 213.

anti-American antipathy here [in Fallujah]" and describes the anger of Fallujans at the deaths of family and friends during American attacks on insurgents.<sup>96</sup> Most analysed articles during the siege periods, however, focused exclusively on the battle through the viewpoint of the Marines, giving them names, quotes and character in ways which were almost never seen from the Iraqi perspective. An example follows here:

On Sunday, a Marine tank fired 18 rounds into a house a suspected insurgent was firing from, said Jeremiah Day, a combat engineer from Minnetonka, Minn. 'And afterwards the guy was still standing,' Corporal Day said. 'It was like Scarface or something.' That same day, Brent Bourgeois, a 20-year-old lance corporal from Kenner, La., said he had seen an American helicopter fire a missile at a man with a slingshot. 'Crazy, huh?' the corporal said... 'It's the fight that never came last year,' Major Petrucci said. 'I guess these guys didn't really want to die for Saddam. But all this anti-American feeling is now uniting them.'<sup>97</sup>

During the November 2004 siege, when American military security around Fallujah was tightened further to prevent 'propaganda' leaks to the media about conditions inside the city, articles which focused on the perspective of US troops were very prominent. The absence of Fallujan civilians and insurgent bodies was declared "an enduring mystery" and the focus of major articles largely remained on descriptions of American actions in Fallujah and plans for its future. An important alternative perspective was provided by a November 11, 2004 *New York Times* article, in which an interview with an insurgent was conducted. This interview indicated that insurgent forces were prepared to fight an asymmetric battle with US forces and were aware of the power of civilian casualties in fostering anti-American sentiment amongst Iraqis.<sup>98</sup> This article was accompanied by a photo of a dead insurgent, contrasting with the majority of others during November which overwhelmingly illustrated American troops in various combat and combat-preparation settings.

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<sup>96</sup> Dexter Filkins, "Up to 16 Die in Gun Battles in Sunni Areas of Iraq", *The New York Times*, March 27, 2004.

<sup>97</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Marines in Falluja Still Face and Return Relentless Fire", *The New York Times*, April 14, 2004.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Wong and Eric Schmitt, "Rebel Fighters Who Fled Attack May Now Be Active Elsewhere", *The New York Times*, November 10, 2004.

Linked to the disappearance of Fallujan citizens in the coverage surrounding the sieges, Iraqi casualty numbers during the American invasion period as a whole and during the Fallujah operations specifically remained largely unknown and contested. The US military claimed not to keep records of the numbers of Iraqi civilians killed in their operations and this fact likely created a challenge for the media which, despite their penchant for quoting statistics, required 'reliable' and 'expert' sources to confirm and support estimates. During the April 2004 siege of Fallujah, estimates of dead and injured were gathered from spokespeople at Fallujah's hospital and were reported every few days during the heaviest periods of fighting: "A hospital spokesman in Fallujah, quoted by The Associated Press, said the number of dead in the last week exceeded 600, including insurgents and civilians, and other accounts said more than 1000 had been wounded."<sup>99</sup> Two Arabic television stations, al-Arabiya and al-Jazeera, based correspondents in Fallujah during the American offensive to film events and interview civilians and doctors. Debate arose between these Arabic news sources, Fallujan citizens and US military command. While residents and Arabic-language media sources claimed that the Americans were using disproportionate force in Fallujah and killing and injuring innocents, General Kimmitt challenged these assertions with direct reference to the media coverage, calling American forces "tremendously precise" and urging viewers to "(c)hange the channel to a legitimate, authoritative, honest news station."<sup>100</sup>

In the wake of the April 2004 offensive, and following several months of routine American bombings in the Fallujah area, a much-discussed report was published in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*. A study had been undertaken to compare mortality in Iraq before and after the American invasion and discovered a two and a half fold increase in the risk of death for Iraqi civilians since the invasion date. Two thirds of all the violent deaths reported to the survey were in one cluster in Fallujah, thus the Fallujah data was excluded to avoid skewing the survey. The results remained

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<sup>99</sup> John F. Burns, "Troops Hold Fire For Negotiations at 3 Iraqi Cities", *The New York Times*, April 12, 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

that an estimated ninety-eight thousand extra deaths had occurred due to invasion and post-invasion violence (a one and a half fold higher risk of death).<sup>101</sup> The publication of this article coincided with the printing of at least two *New York Times* articles which described the destruction wrought in Fallujah by “nearly nightly airstrikes” and quoted Fallujan citizens explaining that the bombing was effectively driving them from their homes and damaging the possibilities for negotiation with local officials.<sup>102</sup> As a second American assault on Fallujah began to appear inevitable, the American and Iraqi governing council forces faced what could have been a public relations disaster in parts of the West, the rest of Iraq and the broader Arab world should news of large numbers of casualties during their second attack be released.

The result was a much more tightly-controlled operation, with Fallujah’s major hospital an early target for capture. All but a few journalists covering the assault were embedded with American troops, thus coverage of the first crucial days in early to mid-November was therefore almost exclusively reported from the standpoint of a reporter describing actions taken on Fallujah by US forces. The only casualty numbers given were those for American forces and Iraqi insurgents: “American commanders said 38 American service members had been killed and 275 wounded in the Falluja assault, and the commanders estimated that 1,200 to 1,600 insurgents—about half the number thought to have been entrenched in Fallujah—had been killed.”<sup>103</sup> Despite these high estimated numbers, the same article later states that “the absence of insurgent bodies in Falluja has remained an enduring mystery.” The means by which the earlier estimate was arrived at are not explained. An article published days earlier during one of the heaviest periods of fighting described the destructive force of American weaponry on

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<sup>101</sup> Les Roberts et al, “Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey”, *The Lancet* online, October 29, 2004, <http://image.thelancet.com/extras/04art10342web.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2004).

<sup>102</sup> Dexter Filkins, “Iraqi Government’s Peace Talks With Falluja Break Off; US Drive Against Rebels Expected”, *The New York Times*, October 19, 2004 and Dexter Filkins and Eric Schmitt, “US Intensifying Bombing Attacks On Falluja Sites”, *The New York Times*, October 16, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Dexter Filkins and James Glanz, “Rebels Routed in Falluja; Fighting Spreads Elsewhere”, *The New York Times*, November 15, 2004.

Fallujah in depth but indicated that Fallujah “appeared eerily deserted”.<sup>104</sup> At this point, Fallujan civilians were for the most part visually and rhetorically invisible to Western audiences.

In terms of representing the position of Fallujan citizens, the UK newspapers surveyed appeared to offer more varied commentary from Iraqis themselves, including increased numbers of interviews and quotes from Iraqi civilians and insurgents. The views of these members of society appeared to be as frequent as those from Iraqi elites and officials. While there was still a strong focus on commentary from US troops involved in actions in Fallujah, UK newspapers appeared to offer more explanation of why violence and anti-US sentiment in Fallujah had developed. These explorations involved open recognition of the politicization of different positions. Styles of presentation varied considerably; an *Observer* article of more than four thousand words consisted entirely of interviews with various Iraqi citizens, documenting their opinions and experiences in post-invasion Iraq.<sup>105</sup> A *Sunday Telegraph* article, written shortly after the contractor deaths, involved a journalist gaining trust and entry into the world of mujahideen fighters in Iraq to explore the reasons for their attacks on coalition and Iraqi governing council forces.<sup>106</sup> A later article for *The Sunday Times* by Hala Jaber investigated sources of anti-American resistance in Fallujah to expose its mixed support base. The resistance fighters were not only foreign jihadists but were also shown to include some local civilians who had become angry with the repeated American incursions into Fallujah.<sup>107</sup> In all cases, the style of writing is substantially different from that commonly encountered in *The New York Times*, with the UK author/journalist inserted into the text presenting their own reactions and judgments of various situations rather than ‘just the facts’ reporting and quoting.

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<sup>104</sup> Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Robert F. Worth, “GI’s Open Attack To Take Falluja From Iraq Rebels”, *The New York Times*, November 8, 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Interviews by Pete Beaumont, “Review: Special Report: Iraq: One Year On”, *The Observer*, March 7, 2004.

<sup>106</sup> Lee Gordon, “The Iraqi Rebels Show Me Their Latest Victim: a German In a Pool of Blood”, *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 11, 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Hala Jaber, “City of Death”, *The Sunday Times*, May 2, 2004.

The greater extent to which Iraqi doctors, police and civilians are quoted in UK newspapers, especially in *Guardian* articles, provides a more substantial picture of life within Fallujah and of the divided loyalties and difficulties of existence faced by residents than is common in the surveyed American coverage. The comments of aid workers in Fallujah are more prominent in UK sources and *The Guardian* included a full article perspective piece based on the experiences of a UK aid worker in Fallujah; several of her statements confirm concerns expressed by Fallujans.<sup>108</sup> Newly-organised Iraqi military forces, who are often portrayed as poorly-trained and ill-equipped, are given voice in a *Sunday Telegraph* article in which they describe past experiences taking 'friendly fire' from American forces while on missions, helping to explain their fears at becoming involved in joint activities.<sup>109</sup> A *Times* article following on April 17, 2004 paints a similar picture of Iraqi troops willing to participate in peace-making ventures and the capture of bombers but ill-at-ease with targeting areas with high civilian populations.<sup>110</sup> Another important factor explored almost exclusively in British newspaper coverage of the Fallujah sieges is the extent to which the attacks on the city ignited a united Iraqi response to assisting Fallujan civilians. A *Daily Telegraph* article explained the scale of activities:

The injured of Fallujah have been moved to the capital in an extraordinary operation organized very largely by ordinary Iraqis. Fleets of ambulances and buses yesterday ferried scores of injured to medical treatment centres...The plight of Fallujah has galvanized the nation, with the relief effort solely mounted by local neighborhoods and mosques. The effort has demonstrated an altruism at odds with the violence.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "Getting Aid Past US Snipers Is Impossible", *The Guardian*, April 17, 2004.

<sup>109</sup> Colin Freeman, "Iraqi Police 'Were Too Scared' to Help US Guards in Fallujah. Officers Who Remained Inside Their Barracks Say They Were Frightened of Being Hit By 'Friendly Fire'", *The Sunday Telegraph*, April 4, 2004.

<sup>110</sup> James Hider, "Soldiers of Misfortune Want to Go Home", *The Times*, April 17, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> David Blair and Jack Fairweather, "Buses Ferry the Injured of Fallujah to Hospital", *The Daily Telegraph*, April 13, 2004.

The reporting of systematic locally-generated relief efforts is absent from other surveyed coverage. This approach to the situation in Fallujah presents a contrasting picture to common representations. The actions of Iraqi citizens are described and they are presented neither as passive objects to be helped or harmed nor are they portrayed as violent killers of coalition troops. Rather, they are people with skills and abilities acting for a group's well-being.

Increased dialogue with Iraqi and Fallujan civilians in UK newspapers produced frequent and important challenges to the frames of understanding established by American officials in the country and outside. The representation of the Bush and Blair governments' statements as just one potential side to a story as opposed to the accepted framework for understanding Iraq scenarios is especially obvious in various *Guardian* articles during the April 2004 attack:

The Bush administration has tried to portray the insurgents inside the city as either foreign fighters or diehard supporters of Saddam Hussein...Yesterday, however, those from Falluja could not understand Mr. Blair's claim. The insurgents were not terrorists but Iraqis, they did not support the old regime and were merely fighting a patriotic war against American occupation. 'The people doing the fighting are locals,' Mr. Mohammad, who fled with his wife and six children, said. 'They are not people who support Saddam.'<sup>112</sup>

Analysed American press and television did periodically recognise links between American actions and Iraqi civilian sentiment towards their interveners. *The Guardian's* basis for summing up the common sentiment in Fallujah as one of alienation due to an excessively-violent American approach was, however, routinely based on testimonies of Fallujan civilians, rather than on elite sources.<sup>113</sup> Frequently, the sentiment expressed by civilians was one of confusion and fear at seemingly contradictory US policies:

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<sup>112</sup> Luke Harding, "Iraq Conflict: 'It's Hell...Everything Will Be Destroyed': Refugees", *The Guardian*, April 30, 2004.

<sup>113</sup> Jonathan Steele, "'Shells and Rockets Were Falling Like Rain': Family Who Escaped Bombing in Falluja Tell How Feelings Towards Coalition Changed", *The Guardian*, April 12, 2004.

An Iraqi doctor in Falluja, Ali Abbas, told al-Jazeera: 'We need help desperately. Bodies are scattered in the streets, families are in a miserable situation, doctors are besieged. Thousands of families are still in Falluja. We hear loudspeakers of the Americans asking us to leave our houses and put up white flags. But at the same time we are hearing explosions and gunfire. We don't know what to do. Should we leave?'<sup>114</sup>

Given this more civilian-centred approach to the UK coverage, it is unsurprising that UK media commentary on the Iraqi, and specifically Fallujan, civilian death toll differed from American coverage. The issue of civilian casualties is dealt with more frequently and is mentioned more commonly in headlines, a very rare occurrence in *New York Times* coverage which tends to quote American and Iraqi troop numbers in Fallujah along with estimated numbers of insurgents and insurgent dead. These are counts which, unlike civilian deaths, were tallied by American forces. An April 9, 2004 *Independent* article places the estimated casualty toll in Fallujah due to American attacks, 280 dead and 400 injured, in its headline and also in its first sentence. The article then goes on to suggest that these numbers may be low given the fact that many casualties may be trapped under rubble or have received hasty burials by family outside a hospital setting.<sup>115</sup> This emphasis on casualty figures was repeated in further *Independent* coverage of the Fallujah attack and reporting of casualty figures in general was more common in the British coverage surveyed. The difficulty, and indeed the impossibility, of reporting live from Fallujah on civilian death and injuries during the early days of the April attack was also highlighted more frequently in UK coverage.

During the run-up to the second November attack, scepticism about the ability of the media to cover any of what might happen to civilians in Fallujah were clearly expressed in papers such as *The Guardian*:

We don't know, and won't know, anything about what happens in the next few days except for what the US military authorities choose to let

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<sup>114</sup> Rory McCarthy, "Curfews As Iraq Rebellion Spreads", *The Guardian*, November 13, 2004.

<sup>115</sup> Patrick Cockburn, "Iraq: The Descent into Chaos: US Has Killed 280 In Fallujah This Week, Says Hospital Doctor", *The Independent*, April 9, 2004.



us know...This is how the fantasy runs: a city the size of Brighton is now only ever referred to as a 'militant's stronghold' or 'insurgents' redoubt'...The 'final assault' is imminent, in which the foreigners who have infiltrated the almost deserted Iraqi city with their extremist Islam will be 'cleared', 'rooted out' or 'crushed'...These are the questionable assumptions and make-believe which are now all that the embedded journalists with the US troops know to report.<sup>116</sup>

During the second attack, as 'official' numbers became essentially unavailable to media sources with the seizure of Fallujah's main hospital, surveyed UK coverage continued to update readers on casualty figures with greater regularity than American papers such as *The New York Times*. A November 7, 2004 *Guardian* article sourced the Iraqi Body Count website, which uses media reports to tally approximate casualty levels in Iraq, to claim that up to 600 civilians had been killed in Fallujah in April 2004, with one half of them being woman and children. The point is immediately made following this estimate that "US forces say they do not keep count of civilian or enemy casualties."<sup>117</sup> This information could be seen as presenting a challenge to the US administration by highlighting their choice not to collect and publish these figures. An *Independent* article in April was stronger and more explicit, claiming that the Americans "refuse to keep count of Iraqi civilian casualties. Lt Gen Ricardo Sanchez, the commander of US forces in Iraq, deals with the question of civilian loss of life by assuming that all dead are rebels."<sup>118</sup>

As the initial violence of the November attack began to subside, *The Observer* and *Guardian* moved quickly to attempt to calculate the number of civilians who might have remained in Fallujah and to report on the conditions of these civilians: "Although many of Falluja's 200,000 to 300,000 residents fled the city before the assault, between 30,000 and 50,000 are believed to have remained during the fighting."<sup>119</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>116</sup> Madeleine Bunting, "Screams Will Not Be Heard", *The Guardian*, November 8, 2004.

<sup>117</sup> Lindsey Hilsum, "The World: Falluja Can Only Be Won When the Battle Ends and People Have Water", *The Observer*, November 7, 2004.

<sup>118</sup> Patrick Cockburn, "Iraq In Chaos: US Strikes Deal To Lift Fallujah Siege As Local Police Return", *The Independent*, April 21, 2004.

<sup>119</sup> Rory McCarthy and Peter Beaumont, "Civilian Cost of Battle For Falluja Emerges", *The Observer*, November 14, 2004.

sampled *New York Times* coverage of the same period in November did not mention civilian numbers in Fallujah at all, although there are a few unspecific mentions that some residents may remain in the city.

Articles which focused on the relationship between attacking troops and Fallujan civilians were also an important aspect of surveyed UK newspaper coverage of the November 2004 assault on Fallujah, although there was only a small amount of such coverage. Insights into the difficult interactions of these two groups helped to illustrate the dramatically different background narratives and frameworks of understanding with which each group operated. Lindsey Hilsum's November 14 *Observer* article briefly explored the contradictions for US troops fighting an enemy they were supposed to be helping: "No soldier can fight unless he hates the enemy- which makes the message that this is all for the Iraqi people difficult to absorb. 'I guess there are some good people- it's jus' that we don' have nothin' to do with them,' mused a marine as he and his colleagues sorted their kit and cleaned their M16 assault rifles. 'I see the little kids in the cars and I feel sorry for them, but when they turn 16 they're evil'."<sup>120</sup> This quote highlights the difficulties of fighting a non-traditional war amid a largely alienated population and once again exposes the challenges US military personnel face in defining their 'enemy' in Fallujah. Like US coverage, there are many articles during the two siege periods in UK coverage which devote a significant amount of print space to quotes and commentary from US troops. In general, however, the UK coverage of American troops is presented differently from the US coverage, in which the quotes from US troops tend to serve either to personalize them as individuals or are used to supply information about the fighting to readers. UK coverage of US troops more often explicitly portrays the frustration and confusion of fighting:

'We walked into this thinking there'd be good guys and bad guys. Then you get here and have men in ambulances firing RPGs at you,'...The Marines have little regard for their foes' mettle or fighting ability. 'When we capture them, they cry like babies. Then they p\*\*\*

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<sup>120</sup> Lindsey Hilsum, "The World: A City In Ruins, Sky Thick With Smoke: 'Let's Kick Ass...the American Way'", *The Observer*, November 14, 2004.

themselves,' Lieutenant Michael Liguorni said. 'We find these little drug bottles around; we think half of these guys are drugged up,' he said as the eerie hiss and bang of rocket-propelled grenades broke the silence, followed by the rattle of rifle fire and the zing of ricochets.<sup>121</sup>

A lengthy *Financial Times* article also exemplifies the differences in UK and US analysed coverage by describing in depth an interrogation process between US forces and an Iraqi woman and man. The author also describes a nighttime attack in which Iraqi insurgent forces shot down a US helicopter:

For the paratroopers, the blood and death of that night, spent amid the charred remains of 16 comrades, hardened them to the plight of Falluja's citizens, who complained of few services, no jobs, rising violence and indiscriminate killing by US troops. The senior officers of the units I rode with in January made an elaborate show of courtesy towards the locals but the rank and file did little to conceal their hostility towards the 'Hadjis', as they called Iraqis. 'You should have been there the night that Chinook went down, maybe you'd understand something,' said a team leader from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, when I asked him about their aggressiveness towards the Iraqis. It was clear to him, even though it may not be clear to higher ranking briefers eager to spin the guerrilla war in Iraq, that 'we are fighting the local population' in Falluja.<sup>122</sup>

The rarity of such coverage can be seen as an indicator of many factors including the physical danger and difficulties for journalists in accessing Fallujan civilians during the attack periods. The short time frame within which many newspaper articles need to be produced also appears to be a significant factor, as many of the articles which were able to provide a richer and more detailed picture of the situation in Fallujah were magazine-length features rather than daily items. Particularly in the case of American coverage, issues of patriotism and of according respect and prominence to the US citizen angle of the story could also be factors which resulted in the prioritizing of

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<sup>121</sup> James Hider, "Rules Get Ragged As Death Comes From All Quarters", *The Times*, April 15, 2004.

<sup>122</sup> Charles Clover, "The Fighters of Falluja US Forces Have Met a Different and Virulent Form of Resistance In This City Near Baghdad", *Financial Times Weekend Magazine*, April 24, 2004.

American troops' actions and opinions over reports on the condition of the Fallujan population.

With the primary exception of the *Guardian* coverage, the disappearance of civilians from much print discussion of the events meant that Western readers, particularly Americans, received little information regarding the conditions of those most directly affected by their activities in Fallujah. Military and political leaders' expressions of hope and confidence that civilian casualties were being avoided to the greatest extent possible were often presented on US media. Repeated quoting of these goals, however, was not necessarily reflective of what was actually occurring on the battlefield. The media's acceptance of the discourse of 'precision' weapons and minimal (but uncountable) casualties was an important 'branding' success for the American administration in several instances.<sup>123</sup>

*US soldiers: highly visible individuals*

One of the major continuing themes in representations of American troops on CNN was the personalizing of individual casualties. Anchor Aaron Brown often opened his nightly news program with detailed information on US troops killed in Iraq; these facts were placed on a background of the American flag with patriotic music played as the information was shown.<sup>124</sup> At the close of his April 30 program, Brown discussed this practice as becoming controversial when one of CNN's competitors, ABC *Nightline*, decided to run a show naming and putting faces to US dead in Iraq. A sizable American broadcaster, the Sinclair Broadcast Group, refused to air the program, calling it unpatriotic, in a controversy reminiscent of *Life* magazine's decision to run a cover spread entirely composed of face shots of US troops killed during the Vietnam War. Many other broadcasters and Senator John McCain, however, were said to

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<sup>123</sup> For further development of this idea, see Carl Conetta, "Disappearing the Dead: Iraq, Afghanistan and the Idea of a 'New Warfare', *Project on Defense Alternatives Research Monograph #9*, February 18, 2004, <http://www.comw.org/pda/0402rm9.html> (accessed July 11, 2007).

<sup>124</sup> The first instance of this practice in analysed coverage was on Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah/82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, CNN news, April 2, 2004.

support this way of publicizing the costs of war.<sup>125</sup> This debate highlights the political power of dead Americans, likely greater than that of dead Iraqis in the US. Although the circumstances are very different to those of 'Black Hawk down', discussions about whether recognising the cost of the war in Iraq through the visualization of individual bodies would provoke anti-war sentiments in the US population were similar to debates about the power of the images of dead US forces in Mogadishu.<sup>126</sup>

The shadow of Vietnam hangs over much media coverage of the Iraq fighting, as fears developed that it was becoming a 'quagmire', but this terminology is used specifically with reference to American lives being lost. Throughout analysed CNN footage discussions never involve the issue of excessive Iraqi casualties as a factor for ending American involvement in Iraq. Rather, civilian casualties are framed as reasons why the Iraqi population will turn against American forces, putting their lives in greater danger and jeopardizing American-led political efforts in Iraq. There is no comment on the irony of this limited range of ethical concern for 'others' in a war that is allegedly being fought for the Iraqi people.

Throughout both attack periods on Fallujah, the vast majority of CNN's reports comprise imagery of American troops 'in action'- climbing over city wreckage with guns, taking cover and shooting at alleged insurgent snipers, or performing routine tasks such as cleaning weapons or servicing vehicles. Technology is a key aspect of these images, although shots of American helicopters and planes bombing Fallujan targets are fairly rare. Many of these shots, including one of soldiers firing over a rooftop wall and taking heavy fire, were used repetitively because of what appeared to be a lack of other quality images. The scene is also reminiscent of historic images of 'trench' warfare, as the soldiers stand to shoot over a wall and then duck behind it in a row. The limited dialogue heard between them emphasizes their cooperation, teamwork and training. At several points, Marines are interviewed, which along with the regular coverage helps to personalize them; they are portrayed as likable and

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<sup>125</sup> Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf/'Nightline' Story, CNN news, April 30, 2004.

<sup>126</sup> For more information on this debate, see "'Nightline' Airs War Dead Amid Controversy", CNN.com, posted May 1, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/SHOWBIZ/TV/05/01/abc.nightline/> (accessed June 8, 2007).

dutiful characters with little understanding of the Iraqi violence against them.<sup>127</sup> CNN coverage was particularly notable for its frequent story focus on individual Marines. Interviews are conducted in which troops discuss their lives, missed loved ones and the difficulties of gaining the trust of Iraqis.<sup>128</sup>

Interviews with Marines and US military experts also serve to maintain the American dominance of the logic and parameters of the assault. As April fighting intensified, CNN reported that US leaders suspected that the worst of the insurgents, including former Saddam-era intelligence officers and Republican Guard, were in Fallujah and that “wiping them out now might provide the best opportunity to break the back of the resistance”.<sup>129</sup> Marines in a report following this one reinforce this view by declaring their frustration with the rules of engagement which prevent them from launching a full-scale assault and with the political calculations which later resulted in their pullout from Fallujah.<sup>130</sup> Although there is acknowledgement in the April 23<sup>rd</sup> report that differences in media coverage mean that Iraqis have a very divergent perspective on the violence in Fallujah and are upset by the civilian casualties, the predominance of US military perspectives in CNN coverage on a regular basis tends to downplay these concerns. The use of retired US military personnel as interpreters of much of the limited battle footage from Fallujah again results in a militarized dialogue and appears to encourage a focus solely on the activities of US troops. Throughout the summer of 2004, despite civilian casualties caused by repeated American bombing of Fallujah, the city was regularly portrayed as falling into extremism because of the halting of the Marine assault in April, which had prevented it from being cleared of insurgents.<sup>131</sup>

As American preparations for the November assault on Fallujah increased, CNN reflected these preparations with increased imagery of soldiers training and preparing their weapons. The troops are again individualized through interviews and

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<sup>127</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Ramadi/Nordland Interview, CNN news, April 6, 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Iraq/Elections/Mosul/Fallujah, CNN news, November 26, 2004.

<sup>129</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, April 23, 2004.

<sup>130</sup> Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf, CNN news, April 25, 2004.

<sup>131</sup> Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, CNN news, July 8, 2004.

several shots of the insides of their tanks, which contain lucky charms and pictures of loved ones.<sup>132</sup> Claims are made that Fallujan citizens want the insurgents driven from their city; the Marines are thus presented as doing a job which is both strategically necessary and supported by Iraqi citizens. The involvement of Iraqi government troops and the support of the governing council for the attack are said to be ways in which the US hopes to prevent civilian backlash against the second assault.<sup>133</sup> During various phases of the attack, several CNN stories worked to promote this perspective, showing what often appeared to be orchestrated images of US and Iraqi soldiers side by side. These reports thus functioned to support the American military's goal of making the attack appear as multilateral and locally-supported as possible.

The repetition of troop 'action' images continued from November 8-11, as the main fighting took place. At times this meant that the same footage was repeated twice in a two or three minute item, making the lack of available alternative coverage obvious. Reassuring updates were made over this imagery about the success of US and Iraqi forces at taking this "ghost town", where only a few desperate and disorganized insurgents remained. As new imagery of Marines blowing up cars and buildings in various parts of Fallujah was shown on November 11, these actions were explained as being necessary because of the large scale insurgent booby-trapping of the city.<sup>134</sup> This issue of booby-trapping grew in significance when footage of an American soldier shooting an apparently injured and disarmed insurgent was shown. A Human Rights Watch spokesperson was briefly interviewed, arguing that if the soldiers were not under clear threat from the insurgent than this killing would constitute a war crime. A military spokesman responds that such caution was necessary as explosives have been hidden in dead Iraqis and insurgents have blown themselves up when Marines have approached them. Aaron Brown concludes this segment by stating that most Marines are dealing with conditions in Fallujah very calmly, thereby painting this incident as a one-off aberration.

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<sup>132</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, October 31, 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Allam Interview, CNN news, November 5, 2004.

<sup>134</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Assault, CNN news, November 11, 2004.

Descriptions of conditions in Fallujah as Marines fought their way into greater portions of it continued to reinforce descriptions of the city as inherently dangerous while overlooking the possibility of severe risk for remaining civilians, who received little consideration or coverage during the fighting. Aaron Brown opened his CNN news program on November 16, 2004 by describing the horrors of “sniper-infested” streets in Fallujah and the fact that Marines often had to step over dead bodies to get into houses.<sup>135</sup> No mention is made of the horrible conditions likely to be affecting any Fallujan civilians left in the city.

A report immediately following by embedded reporter Lindsey Hilsum works to confirm this portrayal of the Marines as reasonable young men dealing with fanatics. A long section of filming shows Marines attempting to deal with a sniper-filled building. An interviewed marine explains that he has urged surrender through an interpreter but the insurgents have rejected this option. It is thus deemed necessary to destroy the building using an air-strike.<sup>136</sup> Voiceover explains that Marines are aware that each house they enter may be booby-trapped and that much of the city must be destroyed for security reasons.<sup>137</sup> Such statements, although they remain undeveloped, answer the obvious question of ‘safer for whom?’ Strategic and media concern is based completely around the need to protect the entering Marines, without any comment on Fallujah’s civilians. Further items also serve to reinforce the legitimacy of the Marines’ invasion of Fallujah; a report details the Marines’ discovery of insurgent weapons caches, propaganda, medical supplies and letters which allegedly confirm the presence of the al-Qaeda operative Zarqawi in Fallujah at some point. Jane Arraf opens a report on Marines’ discoveries of insurgent tunnels, weapons and correspondence allegedly to and from the infamous Zarqawi. As Marines explain the uses for all the insurgent equipment they are said to have found, the headline “Finding The Hornet’s Nest” appears onscreen.<sup>138</sup> Embedded reporter Karl Penhaul echoes earlier statements of

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<sup>135</sup> Iraq/Hassan Execution/Fallujah/Shooting, CNN news, November 16, 2004.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Iraq/Fallujah Assault, CNN news, November 11, 2004.

<sup>138</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, November 18, 2004.



Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld when he points out that most insurgents have likely escaped to other Iraqi cities and will simply return to Fallujah should US troops not stay in the city to protect it.<sup>139</sup> Rather than indicating that this likelihood may indeed have made the siege and attack on Fallujah by the Americans an action of questionable utility, the assumption appears to be that the US and allied Iraqi troops will require a long stay in Fallujah, precisely the conditions which caused friction with residents in the early stages of the Iraq invasion.

### The Implications of Absence

Gregory quotes Roxanne Euben in *The Colonial Present* to point out that part of the importance of the frequently asked post-9/11 question “why do they hate us?” is its revelation of the power and luxury of the inquirer, who has previously never asked this question.

As Roxanne Euben remarked...‘a privilege of power too often unseen: the luxury of not having *had* to know, a parochialism and insularity that those on the margins can neither enjoy nor afford.’ It is this asymmetry- accepting the privilege of contemplating ‘the other’ without acknowledging the gaze in return, what novelist John Wideman calls ‘dismissing the possibility that the native can look back at you as you are looking at him’- that marks this as a colonial gesture of extraordinary contemporary resonance.<sup>140</sup>

As Gregory goes on to point out, the answer as to why enmity exists seems to most frequently to trace back to ‘them’ not to ‘us’. The search for answers after the 9/11 attacks was one which looked outwards, with American innocence and beneficence pre-assumed, and to a large extent unquestionable. This work suggests that the media often functions to preserve ‘unquestionable’ areas, rather than challenge them with new perspectives.

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<sup>139</sup> Iraq/Fallujah, CNN news, November 18, 2004.

<sup>140</sup> Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 21. The italicization is Euben’s.

In the case of representing Fallujah, many Western media narratives did not allow the 'them' in question- the Fallujan people- a voice of their own. Those deemed responsible for anti-American violence were often slotted into recognizable categories of 'villain', associated either with the regime of Saddam Hussein or with the brand of fundamentalist Islam seen as responsible for the 9/11 attacks. In media coverage where this overt 'othering' did not take place, Fallujans were often rendered invisible by coverage when journalists were unable to access them. Dangers and difficulties in accessing the city of Fallujah, likely due to American military actions, the embed system and the actions of some violent Iraqi groups, led to the city's representation primarily in terms decided by the American military and policymakers. When Fallujah was presented as a "hotbed" of extremism and a "hornet's nest", with its daily functions as a home and network of necessary infrastructure largely unseen, framings of the city as 'target' to be 'taken out' where likely more palatable to Western viewers.

The extent to which binary enemy/friend categories could not hold in Iraq, and the extent to which these unstable constructions were 'fed-back' and reconstructed by Iraqi interpretations of the behaviour and involvement of the Americans in their country, were only regularly explored in select, and in the case of the coverage analysed primarily non-American, media coverage. The proximity of 'friend' and 'enemy' was a situation that new American military training was supposed to come closer to dealing with, better recognition of these categories was to be achieved so that one side could be preserved and the other destroyed. The blurring of the enemy/friend categories, however, during the realities of fighting illustrates the extent to which new American military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) could only limit the confusion and 'engagement' of battlefield encounters between Americans and Iraqi 'insurgents' to a certain extent. Fighting 'insurgents' in one block while aiding civilians in the next was part of the rhetoric and strategy associated with (MOUT), yet undertaking these sorts of judgments and actions in battle often proved to be an impossible venture for US troops. While new technology may increasingly allow war to be fought at a distance,

when close encounters between parties cannot be prevented many old problems with war resurface.

Debbie Lisle and Andrew Pepper suggest that the film *Black Hawk Down* “reveals slippages between the falsely opposed categories of ‘America’ and ‘the world’, even as American power is affirmed and rearticulated in these slippages.”<sup>141</sup> In the case of Fallujah, verbal, textual and visual strategies which distanced Western audiences from the human elements of Fallujah as a city and from the lives of its inhabitants often may have contributed to viewing publics seeing American forces as ‘just’ and ‘moral’ combatants when defined against the violent and chaotic space of Fallujah (and more generally Iraq). Media coverage which dealt with the ‘messy’ realities of interaction between Americans and Iraqis is rare, but it provides important counter-evidence of the ways in which clear distinctions between ‘friend’ and enemy ‘other’ are challenged in Iraq on both individual and nation-state levels. As is also suggested by Lisle and Pepper, the unrepresented links between ‘America’ and ‘Iraq’ and ‘America’ and ‘Somalia’ are often those developed through increasingly interlinked and interdependent globalizing economies. These similarities between the case studies, along with several others, will be explored in a concluding chapter to follow, which will deal specifically with important, comparative elements.

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<sup>141</sup> Lisle & Pepper, “The New Face of Global Hollywood”, 169.

"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2004

**Late Edition**  
New York: Today, rain, windy, con-  
tinued cool, high 41. Tonight, steady  
rain ends, low 41. Tomorrow, few  
showers, heavy, high 41. Wednesday,  
high 46, low 38. Details, Page D15.

ONE DOLLAR



Iraqis chanted anti-American slogans in Falluja yesterday as burned bodies of Americans were suspended on a bridge over the Euphrates River.

## 4 FROM U.S. KILLED IN AMBUSH IN IRAQ; MOB DRAGS BODIES

**Assault in Falluja — 5 G.I.'s Die  
in Bombing 15 Miles Away**

By JEFFREY GETTLEMAN

FALLUJA, Iraq, March 31 — Four Americans working for a security company were ambushed and killed Wednesday, and an enraged mob then publicly dragged the burned bodies through the streets of downtown Falluja, hanging at least two corpses from a bridge over the Euphrates River.

Less than 15 miles away, in the same area of the increasingly violent Sunni Triangle, four American soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb ripped through their armored personnel carrier.

The violence was one of the most brutal outbursts of anti-American rage since the war in Iraq began more than a year ago. And the scenes of deteriorating violence in the Falluja area, a center of anti-American hostility, were of Baghdad, but became so precarious that no American or Iraqi forces responded to the attack against the civilians, who worked for a North Carolina company.

Fourteen bricks into the M109 vehicle. A group of boys yanked a stick during body into the street and ripped it apart, someone then tied a chunk of brick to a rock and tossed it over a telephone wire.

"Viva martyrdom!" shouted Said Khalid, a taxi driver. "Long live the resistance!"

Nearly, a boy no older than 10 ground his heel into a burned head. "Where is Bush?" the boy yelled. "Let him come here and see this!"

Musclemen yanked the bodies, punching their fists into the air. The streets filled with hundreds of people. "Falluja is the graveyard of Americans," they chanted.

Several news crews filmed the mayhem. The images of a frenzied crowd mutilating bodies were reminiscent of the scene from Somalia in 1993, when a mob dragged the body

Continued on Page A12

## And That's 20: Albany Budget Is Late Again

By AL BAKER

ALBANY, Thursday, April 1 — New York's record officials went home Wednesday night without passing a state budget, making this the 20th year in a row the budget will be late and extending a pattern of state government gridlock that is unrivaled in the nation.

As the midnight budget deadline came and went, Gov. George E. Pataki and the state's two top legislative leaders, Joseph L. Bruno and Stephen L. Cook, met for an hour and emerged pointing fingers of blame at each other.

Later, in a sign of embitterment at the record of 20 missed budget deadlines, a committee of lawmakers from both parties and both houses met and announced an agreement on a set of measures to address the late budget cycle, including moving the start of the state fiscal year back to May 1 from April 1.

As for this year's spending plan, it could be weeks or months until lawmakers agree on it.

As one journalist, Robert G. Prentiss, a Republican from Calverton, Albany, sang on the floor of the Assembly, "When the red, red robin goes back, hell, hell, along, it's a sure, sure sign of spring that a late state budget will still be far, far behind."

New York's history of passing late budgets is unmatched by any other state capital, fed by a combination of partisan rivalries, where the participants suffer few if any political consequences for their actions, according to scholars, financial experts and government watchdogs.

"The system is dysfunctional,"

Continued on Page B5

## VETO THREATENED ON HIGHWAY BILL

G.O.P. Split as Local Goals  
Collide With Deficit

By CARL HULME

WASHINGTON, March 31 — Failing a car from Ronald Reagan, President Bush is threatening to veto a bill that would allow states to use federal money for highway projects.

Mr. Bush's decision to veto the bill is a sign of his frustration with the House and Senate hold down road spending in favor of the highway program, which is a key part of the deficit-reduction package.

But lawmakers are determined to pass for 1,000 projects throughout the states back home, from the usual bridge, highway and road-building projects to things like \$15 million for horse trails in Virginia; \$15 million for the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich.; \$1 million for a transportation network for the Army Infantry Museum in Columbus, Ga.; and \$5 million for a parking garage in downtown Boston, Mass.

There is also \$1.7 million for improvements to the New York State Thruway in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., honoring the roadrunner known as Mr. New York's Eve.

When Mr. Reagan was president, embedded in the trans-america affair, he took on Congress over highway spending in early 1987, declaring that the bill "represents a failure to reverse the decline that is required to constrain federal spending, especially pork barrel spending." But his veto was easily overridden, giving

Continued on Page A19

## 9/11 Widows Skillfully Applied The Power of a Question: Why?

By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

WASHINGTON, March 31 — When the 9/11 Memorial Museum was dedicated in Midtown, N.Y., clearing out closets, many of the 9/11 widows were

in the crowd. They were not just there to see the museum, but to see the women who had lost their husbands on Sept. 11. They were there to see the women who had lost their husbands on Sept. 11.

At all times, the widows were there to see the women who had lost their husbands on Sept. 11. They were there to see the women who had lost their husbands on Sept. 11.

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on one grieving widower in a navy blue T-shirt. Centered on the front was a question: "Why?"

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## Act of Hatred, Hints of Doubt

By JOHN F. BURNS

WASHINGTON, March 31 — Hours after the deaths of the four American civilians who were dragged from their vehicle and mutilated in Falluja on Wednesday, an American general went

before reporters in Baghdad with the air of a man who had experienced a

series of setbacks. He said that the situation in Falluja was "very serious" and that the American forces were "under a great deal of pressure."

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## World Court Rules U.S. Should Review 51 Death Sentences

By MARLENE KENNEDY  
and TIM WELNER

THE HAGUE, March 31 — The International Court of Justice on Wednesday ordered American courts to review death sentences imposed on 51 Mexicans in the United States, saying their rights under international law had been violated.

The decision, by the United Nations' highest court, was seen as a strong rebuke to the United States.

In a ruling handed down before the judges in the morning, the court said the prisoners' rights to speak with Mexican consular officials after their arrests had been repeatedly violated.

It ordered the United States to undertake "an effective review" of the 51 death sentences.

The next Mexican to be executed in the United States is scheduled to die May 19 in Oklahoma.

President Vicente Fox of Mexico called the decision "a victory for international rights, for human rights."

After days, a senior legal adviser to the Mexican Foreign Ministry, said Mexico "totally trusts" that the United States will do the right thing.

Continued on Page A12

## INSIDE

### Cyprus Talks Deadlocked

Talks on ending the 35-year ethnic division of Cyprus ended without formal agreement, but a proposal will be put to a vote by Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Page A8

### Gay Marriage Initiative

Georgia's lawmakers approved a measure that will allow voters to decide whether a ban on same-sex marriage should be added to the state's Constitution.

Page A14

### Proposal on Stock Options

The Financial Accounting Standards Board has proposed requiring companies to report the value of employee and executive stock options as an expense.

Page C1

### Full Recycling Returns Today

Many New Yorkers may be surprised for the resumption of full recycling of glass, plastic, and paper this morning after a disruption of almost two years.

Page A1

### News Summary

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12

### U.S. ...

U.S. ... B-12  
Business Day ... C-12  
Circuits ... D-12  
Economic ... E-12  
House & Senate ... F-12  
International ... G-12  
Sports ... H-12  
U.S. ... I-12  
World ... J-12



From right, Kristin Benbow, Mandy Kleinberg, Lewis Van Anders and Patty Cassano, who have dropped the Sept. 11 inquiry. "We simply wanted to know why our husbands were killed," Ms. Benbow said.

## For 2, Road to Final Four Started in Prep School

By JOE DRAPE

BLAKESBORO, N.J., March 30 — Before they were college basketball stars, they were perhaps the most talented bodyguards to appear in a production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" before they began answering questions about their N.B.A. dreams, they posed Blair Academy's 113 boys on bicycles that had been brought to the basketball court.

Mostly Lael Deng and Charlie Villanueva were boys. In the beginning of their prep school careers, they were homebound and lonely boys who missed their mothers and were

overwhelmed by their studies. When Deng walks onto the court of the Klammath in San Antonio for the annual semifinals of the N.C.A.A. men's basketball tournament on Saturday, the academy's headmaster, T. Chandler Hardwick III, said what he will not see in the 6-foot-6 freshman who has led Blair to its 14th Final Four appearance, but the Blair senior who has been

responsible for his dorm room last spring.

When Villanueva enters the game for Connecticut, Hardwick said what he will not be seeing by the 6-11 forward's polished offensive game. Instead he will be proud of how, over three years here, a struggling student discovered the work habits to match an innate intelligence and put up the games and SAT scores to prove it.

Mostly, Hardwick said, he will recognize how an Blair 15-year-old student at an elite preparatory school in New Jersey — an academy that

resides in the walls of his dorm room last spring.

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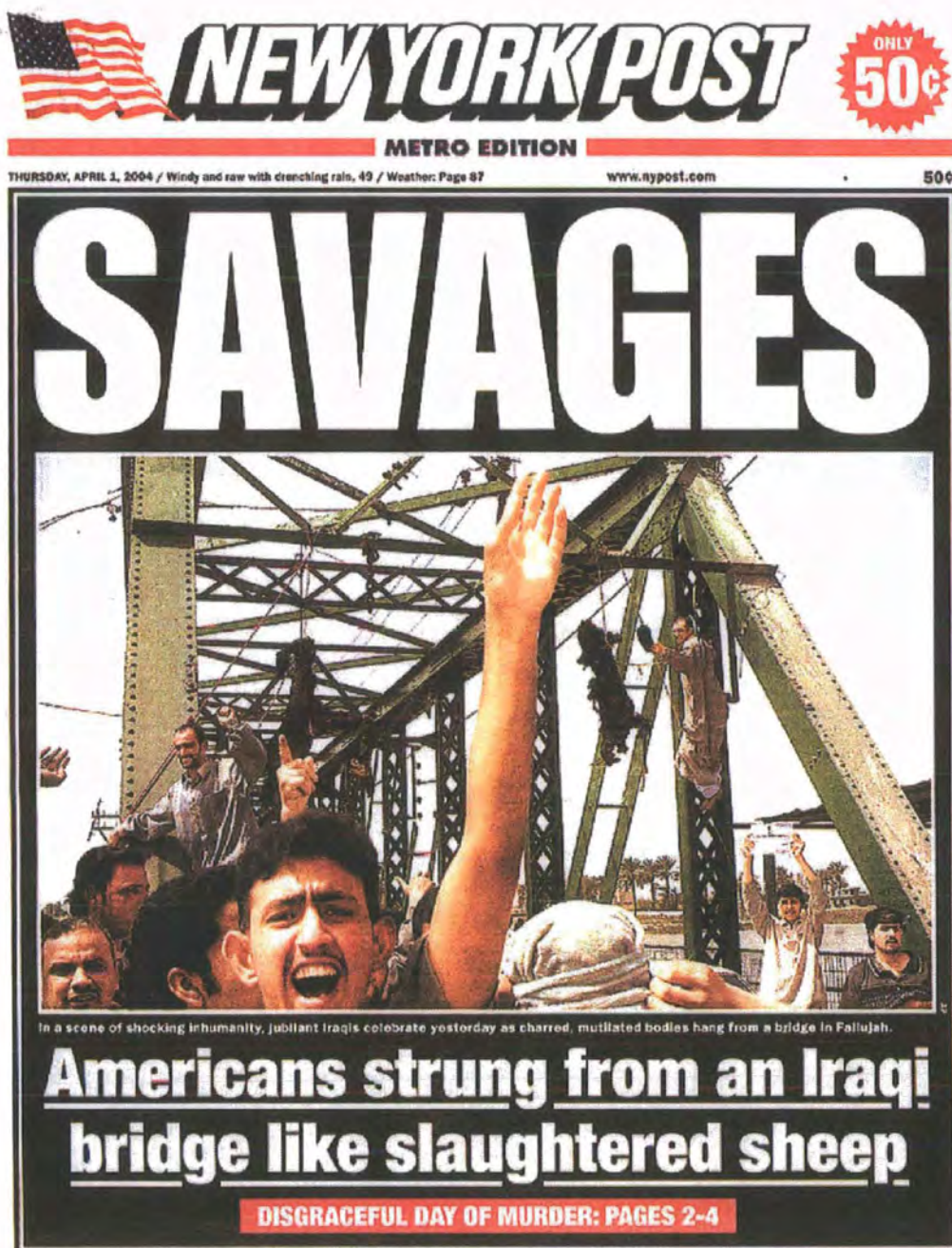
Mostly, Hardwick said, he will recognize how an Blair 15-year-old student at an elite preparatory school in New Jersey — an academy that

Continued on Page D19

Continued on Page A3

Figure 6: The contractor deaths represented in *The New York Times*.





**Figure 7:** Khalid Mohammed's image used in a different context in *The New York Post*.





## The £10bn scandal of the west coast main line

Special report in G2

Best for Science

# The Guardian

## Public misled over cost of £10bn rail line

James Black and Bob Evans

The Conservative government and the company it created to run Britain's privatized railways, Railtrack, revealed last night that the cost of the £10bn west coast main line project, the most important piece of infrastructure since the 1990s, is £1.2bn more than it was when it was first announced. The project was expected to cost £1.2bn. Latest estimates are that it will cost almost £2.4bn, making it one of the world's most expensive engineering works.

President George Bush's plan to send American troops to the east has a similar budget.

A previously unpublished report obtained by the Guardian under the "open government" act shows how early in 1994 - two years before Railtrack was privatised and five years before the original estimate of the project's cost - the government's cost estimates were revised upwards by £1.2bn.

The report also says that the government's cost estimates were revised upwards by £1.2bn. The report also says that the government's cost estimates were revised upwards by £1.2bn.

## Death in Falluja



## Americans burned and mutilated by mob

Harry McQuinn in Baghdad

The state department confirmed that the four victims were American soldiers working for the Pentagon. It was not clear why they had been targeted. The state department confirmed that the four victims were American soldiers working for the Pentagon. It was not clear why they had been targeted.

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## Novelist McEwan barred from entering US by border officials

Audrey Simon

One of Laura Bailey's friends, British author Ian McEwan, has been barred from entering the US by border officials. The author was stopped at the border and told he could not enter the country.

One of Laura Bailey's friends, British author Ian McEwan, has been barred from entering the US by border officials. The author was stopped at the border and told he could not enter the country.

Excellent Sport!

I'd rather be downing a Hen!

A perfect combination of smoothness and strength, with a subtle blend of flavours.

A most Gratifying Ale.

www.oldpackethen.co.uk

## German World Cup victory: was it a fix?

Luke Harding in Berlin

For the past few years, they have been referred to as Germany's secret. It's the story of how the German football team won the World Cup in 2006.

For the past few years, they have been referred to as Germany's secret. It's the story of how the German football team won the World Cup in 2006.

Quick Index

Weather 26

Letters 26

Cryptic Crossword 32

Quick Crossword 32-33

Today's TV 32-33 back page

CS APPRAT

Figure 8: This image was cropped to avoid showing a more visible human leg in the ashes.













**Image 20:** Remote imagery of Fallujah – from Global Security.org.



**Image 21:** After a bombing – an Agence France Press image.



**Image 22:** American forces in Fallujah – from US military website.



**Image 23:** Bombarding Fallujah, November 2004 – from US military website.





Image 24: A dead US soldier – shown the German *Stern* magazine.



Image 25: Doctors and US troops at Fallujah hospital – this image from a online source is said to have appeared in *The New York Times*.



**Image 26:** A young casualty in Fallujah – shown on al-Jazeera.



**Image 27:** Fallujan insurgents pictured with weapons – from the *Middle East Online* website

## Conclusion – The Shadow of ‘Black Hawk Down’

At a press conference held immediately after the March 31, 2004 contractor deaths in Iraq, Sarah Rosenberg of ABC news asked the question that echoed throughout several other media reports presented on or shortly after the day of the attacks: Was this localized incident in Fallujah comparable to events that had taken place in Somalia eleven years earlier, at least in a visual sense? General Kimmitt responded briefly and swiftly: “My comment is, sometimes false comparisons are not helpful.”<sup>1</sup> One would be justified in wondering when ‘false comparisons’ are ever helpful.

Regardless of the general’s refusal to address the incident comparatively, several news items highlighted similarities between the events in Fallujah and those of ‘Black Hawk down’. In a *Washington Times* article, author Paul Crespo says Americans were “reeling” from the “barbarous and gruesome ambush” of four contractors “protecting food convoys” in Fallujah; “Those victims’ charred bodies were mutilated and dragged through the streets in a despicable manner eerily reminiscent of the Black Hawk debacle in Mogadishu, Somalia. After TV screens worldwide filled with photos and videos of that 1993 incident, Bill Clinton promptly withdrew our troops.”<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, it was the visual elements of similarity between these events which were most frequently noted. Although it constituted only a brief mention in most items, this aspect will be discussed in depth in a further section of this chapter, as it reveals much that has not changed regarding the manner in which ‘others’ are represented by an ‘us’. Initially, however, the larger geopolitical discourses called upon to link these two events will be investigated.

In the Crespo article, along with several others which were surveyed, Mogadishu is presented as a failure because American troops ‘cut and ran’ in the aftermath of a few lost soldiers. In a chain of cause and effect, this action is said to have

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<sup>1</sup> Deputy Director For Coalition Forces Hosts News Conference On Security Operations In Iraq, States News Service, Washington, March 31, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Crespo, “Somalia Redux? Time For Forceful Action In Iraq”, *The Washington Times*, April 7, 2004.



emboldened 'terrorists', including al-Qaeda, who then have assumed that causing American casualties will lead the US to withdraw from various conflict situations. In order to rectify this ongoing issue, a strong military response, which was not undertaken in Mogadishu, is deemed necessary for Fallujah. The 1990s humanitarian mission gone wrong is thus linked to a current situation of invasion and insurgency under the new geopolitical discourse of 'the war on terror'. Significantly, the 'enemy' themselves are shown to have adopted a near-identical discourse. Versions of Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* are said to be circulating in Iraq as motivational materials for those willing to attack American 'invaders' and an Osama bin Laden speech in which he refers to the failures of America in Somalia is noted.<sup>3</sup> Such anecdotes suggest an ambiguity and 'openness' of the *Black Hawk Down* film to a variety of 'readings', which likely were not planned by its producers. These comments also call to mind Lisle and Pepper's mention of a Somali showing of *Black Hawk Down* in Mogadishu, where crowds cheered every moment of US defeat in the film, thus neatly reversing the opposed categories of 'hero' and 'enemy'.<sup>4</sup>

While there was undoubtedly a tendency in media coverage to link Mogadishu 1993 and Fallujah 2004 through a narrative based upon the 'war on terror', there was an equally strong and opposing inclination, far more detailed than the response of General Kimmitt, to stress that these two events were not the same. This insistence came in spite of the fact that many commentators recommended a similar, militarized response to each situation. An Associated Press article by Tom Raum, published on the day of the contractor killings, is an example of coverage which differentiates the events.<sup>5</sup> His argument hinges on the fact that the US "has far more at stake in Iraq" in terms of presidential "credibility", "strategic importance" and "level of investment". These terms are quoted from a Brookings Institution expert and are not further explained,

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<sup>3</sup> See Crespo, "Somalia Redux?"; Rod Nordland, Melinda Liu & Scott Johnson, "The Dark Road Ahead", *Newsweek*, April 12, 2004 and William Kristol, "Honour The Slain By Crushing Mob", *The Australian*, April 6, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Debbie Lisle & Andrew Pepper, "The New Face of Global Hollywood: *Black Hawk Down* and the Politics of Meta-Sovereignty", *Cultural Politics* 1, Is. 2 (2005): 176.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Raum, "Stakes For US Much Higher In Iraq Than They Were In Somalia", *The Associated Press*, March 31, 2004.

although it is demonstrably the case that the current American administration has invested far greater numbers of troops, amounts of equipment, and funding in the invasion and reconstruction of Iraq than was ever allocated to Somalia.<sup>6</sup> Vague comments about a US withdrawal from Iraq being “more complicated, perhaps leading to civil war and creating new havens for terror organizations” are slightly hollow points of differentiation from Somalia, however, given that the country fell back into civil strife after the departure of the US and UN troops. Several years prior to the Iraq invasion, Somalia was already labelled a safe haven for al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups; post-9/11, these comments on Somalia’s links to ‘the war on terror’ have only increased. These points of difference between the two cases do not hold.

How, then, is Fallujah, and more broadly Iraq, *not* like Somalia? In terms of public preparedness for the incidents, government self-positioning and rationale for their actions were much more coordinated with regards to Iraq than in the case of Somalia. The ‘war on terror’ links to the case of Somalia have only been made on a widespread basis retrospectively, whereas the buildup to the Iraq war, after the 9/11 events, was steeped in ‘war on terror’ discourses. George W. Bush’s representation of ‘the war on terror’ as a long war, often described in dramatic, global terms of ‘good versus evil’, was largely quoted verbatim in many media sources. The US public had therefore been at least rhetorically prepared for a ‘war’ in Iraq and the inevitability of some casualties. Despite later criticism and scepticism regarding these statements, the media often repeated the Bush administration’s linking of Iraq to ‘the war on terror’, through unproved allegations of Saddam Hussein’s support for al-Qaeda and his alleged proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Invading Iraq was thus represented as an absolute priority for American and world security, while Somalia is often described as merely a humanitarian mission gone wrong. The fact that Somalia’s humanitarian situation had also once been deemed a ‘threat’ to global security by

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<sup>6</sup> The cost of the Iraq war is estimated to be about \$400 billion thus far, mostly financed through borrowing, [www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle-east/jan-june07/warcost\\_05-23.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle-east/jan-june07/warcost_05-23.html). Troop deaths are estimated at 3658 and injured at 25,950, [www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_casualties.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm) (accessed July 16, 2007).

would-be 'global north' interveners was long forgotten, belonging to a pre-9/11 time when 'threats' were conceived differently.

As has been observed by many commentators, 'the war on terror' discourse is highly dependent on problematic binary representations of 'us/them' and 'terrorists/civilization' which are similar to those which haunt media and government representations of the Somalia intervention. Indeed, many of the roots of 'terror' discourses may be seen in the predictions of violent culture-based clashes described by Samuel Huntington in the early 1990s. In addition to supporting binary divides based on cultural criteria, Susan Moeller suggests that the "war on terror" discourse has also restricted other areas of discussion, such as American citizens' and journalists' willingness to criticize their government for failings and hypocrisies regarding human rights issues. Interestingly, she sees 'human rights' discourses as being at their greatest strength, at least rhetorically, during the post-Cold War 1990s, at the time of the Somalia intervention.<sup>7</sup> Research in this work would suggest that even during its 'heyday' period in the 1990s, discourses founded on concern for others across national boundaries were heavily circumscribed by fatalistic conceptualizations of geopolitics and discourses based on the primacy of the nation-state.

There are important explanatory absences in these discourses for anyone willing to push the Brookings expert's term "strategic" beyond its use in 'war on terror' representations. In particular, economic reasons for American involvement in Iraq, including its businesses' and its public's high demand for oil, were not mentioned in analysed coverage of the events in Fallujah, and seem to be very rarely discussed in more general Iraq coverage. Such economic considerations do not fit within the cultural and security rhetoric of the 'war on terror' discourse. As Lisle and Pepper suggest in their work on *Black Hawk Down*, such "deterritorialized, mobile and circulating relationships" require not only analyses of modes of representation, through study of the content of media discourses, but also modes of production, that is, the

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Moeller, "A Moral Imagination: The Media's Response to the War on Terrorism", in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allen & Barbie Zelizer, 73 (London: Routledge, 2004).



operation of conceptual and material constraints on what and how images and narratives are circulated, as well as to who and when. While the next section will briefly consider the content of both sets of images, those of Mogadishu and those of Fallujah, rationales for the production of the particular narratives used will be linked in following sections to flows of power and influence in a global media sphere.

### **Imaging 'Others' in Mogadishu & Fallujah**

Much academic research, including that of Derek Gregory, James Ryan, Robert Young and others discussed throughout this work, has explored the ways in which 'other' cultures have been represented by 'the West', dating back to early colonial encounters. Most have described the dangers and inevitable omissions when conflicts are overwhelmingly presented as struggles between 'barbaric' or 'primitive' cultures and 'civilized' ones. Gregory details three strategic methods of 'othering': "opposing", "locating" and "casting out"; these three categories are in evidence in both the Somalia and Fallujah cases.<sup>8</sup> The "opposing" relationship has been well-detailed above, referring to the limited, culture-based, binary categories into which 'clashes' between various groups have been placed. 'The war on terror' discourse represents one important strategy which results in the 'othering' of those deemed to be 'terrorists' and 'barbarians'.

Initially, however, according to Gregory, 'others' are reduced to objects, usually in a primarily visual and technical sphere. In Fallujah, this occurrence is particularly obvious. Military technology, along with visual strategies used by both the military and the media, represented the space of Fallujah as one largely devoid of community, networks of services and people. It was instead viewed, usually at a distance but sometimes close-up, as an abandoned space, a 'backdrop' against which the battles between American troops and 'insurgents' took place. The effects of these battles on Fallujan residents, or even the suggestion that Fallujan citizens existed in the city to be injured/killed during the times of siege, were often downplayed or went unrecognized.

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<sup>8</sup> See Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 248-249.

In the case of Somalia, consistent representation of the country as a space of war, famine and violence rendered it an unimaginable 'hell' to Westerners, illustrated primarily through close-ups of emaciated women and children contrasted with images of armed men. The ruined city of Mogadishu only began to be pictured on a regular basis after the US/UN hunt for General Aidid began. Because nightly 'surgical' air strikes to 'take out' Aidid, along with their aftermath, often could not be represented by the media because of security issues, the extent of the destruction of these attacks was largely unseen by Westerners. The devaluation of the city, through long-standing background descriptions of it as an already-destroyed place of 'others' who appeared destined to self-destruct in warfare, was thus a difficult discourse for the media to challenge, even when efforts were made to do so. Portraits of successful rebuilding and peace in rural Somali areas were also only rarely seen.

Gregory's final category of "casting out" deals with strategies by which particular peoples' lives are deemed not to matter. In many ways, as Gregory suggests, this is achieved through the labelling of 'our' armed opponents as 'insurgents', 'terrorists', 'warlords' or 'gangs'. They are people whose cause is not 'just', individuals who in political and legal terms are often not recognized and therefore in any way protected by the codes of conduct which apply to 'us', such as the Geneva Conventions. In the case of Fallujah, the category of 'civilian', while supposedly protected within the American 'surgical' attack military discourses, was often said to be empty. No 'civilians', or minimal civilians, were recognized as residing in Fallujah during the times of siege. Thus there was no one to protect; all those remaining, who were classed as 'insurgents', were fair game for destruction. In Somalia, the 'innocent' and the 'evil-doers' were also highly polarized discursive groups whose boundaries often could not be maintained on the ground, especially during 'precision' air-strikes. The failure of these binary categories to represent the complex, messy realities of specific situations is occasionally recognized in media coverage, sometimes by members of American forces who fought in Mogadishu and Fallujah. These accounts, however, remain the exception, rather than standard, in analysed media coverage of both these conflicts.

Television coverage offers many opportunities to highlight the use of Gregory's categories immediately following the 2004 contractor attack, particularly in the visual realm. Fallujah, like Mogadishu, is portrayed as a dangerous, violent place. As mentioned above, images of men and boys cheering and participating in the desecration of the dead contractors in Fallujah are highly reminiscent of Somali citizens dragging dead American troops after the 'Black Hawk down' events. The only significant factors of difference are the burned state of the corpses in Fallujah, which rendered the bodies unrecognizable as specific individuals, and the presence of women in the Somali case; none are visible in the Fallujah footage. Several analysed media items featured a selective reading of the activities of contractors in Iraq, in much the same way that the role of American troops in Somalia was obfuscated following 'Black Hawk down'. The violence and dangers for civilians that were created by military invasion in the case of Iraq and, in Somalia's case, by the activities of elite US troops, did not tend to be a central theme of stories in Western media coverage. The activities of foreign troops were therefore not regularly seen as motivation for the violence against these groups carried out by civilians and insurgents. Rather, American contractors and troops were portrayed as benevolent forces helping to rebuild the 'damaged' spaces of Somalia and Iraq. This presentation of events was used by President Clinton after the 'Black Hawk down' incidents and was echoed by General Kimmitt and Dan Senor after the contractor killings. In both cases, some Western media supported this discourse with quotes from 'confused' troops who were unable to understand the violence being inflicted on them.

Because American involvement in both Somalia and Iraq was justified either fully or at least partially as humanitarian, US government representatives in both cases attempted to differentiate between hostile elements of the population, 'insurgent' forces and 'gangs', and the majority of peaceful citizens, who were often assumed to support the methods and actions of US forces. In both instances, these distinctions failed to hold, with the majority of the populations in Mogadishu and Fallujah expressing anger and frustration over American actions and suffering the effects of their military

presence. American troops, however, often functioned as if such differentiation could be clearly maintained, or at least that their desire to distinguish was effort enough. The media correspondingly detailed their strategies rather than routinely challenging overall approaches, for example the morality or efficacy of attacking Mogadishu and Fallujah.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of insurgents to conduct attacks against American forces in urban, heavily-populated areas in both Iraq and Somalia did pose the problem of people who were not armed and fighting being caught in the crossfire between those who were. It is worth noting, however, that this was not solely a choice on the part of the insurgent forces, as was often suggested in media quotes from US troops and commanders. American forces chose to respond to insurgent attacks and to actively conduct offensive maneuvers in ways which also put civilian populations at risk. This 'choice' is rarely presented as such for American forces, which instead are portrayed as having few options in their possible responses to the 'extremist' groups. It is often implicit in many media narratives that morality and 'honour' in battle reside solely with the American troops. In both case studies, Somali and Iraqi challengers to the American presence in their countries are portrayed as having no concern for civilian life; instead, they are presented as coming from fiercely vengeful cultures, based in age-old local custom and the Islamic faith.

As has been suggested throughout this chapter, what these binary discourses omit is extremely important. Among what is often not acknowledged are the flows and interconnections which have existed and continue to exist between 'our' world and

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<sup>9</sup> Both an approach to combat and a condition of the fighting in Mogadishu were repeated in Fallujah- the use of 'wanted' posters with monetary rewards to encourage civilians to turn in top insurgents to American forces and publicized fears that insurgents would use civilians as 'human shields' when doing battle with US troops. The fact that the 'wanted' posters had prompted public ridicule and anger in Mogadishu, and had only added questionable amounts to US intelligence in the city, did not appear to have discouraged their use later in Fallujah. In the case of Fallujah, media mention of this particular strategy was very brief. More emphasis was placed on the 'playing card' approach of placing the images and names of Iraq's most wanted figures on decks of playing card-size paper. There is some indication, however, that 'wild-West' attempts at arresting various 'wanted' people in Fallujah met with similar public distaste in this city as in Mogadishu, despite media description of this tactic as a "hearts and minds" strategy to distinguish Fallujan offenders from "law-abiding" residents. See Eric Schmitt, "Marines Battle Guerrillas in Streets of Falluja", *The New York Times*, April 9, 2004.

'their' 'danger zones'. As Gregory and Lisle and Pepper suggest<sup>10</sup>, these flows, often of global capitalism, are in some senses de-territorializing; they function to break down the barriers between 'us' and 'them' which other colonising discourses seek to install. The rich mix of political, economic, military and social interactions between America and Somalia and America and Iraq thus cannot, and should not, be ignored or erased. Some Somali gunmen likely attacked American 'invaders' using US weaponry, dictators in both countries were tolerated for oil and security privileges, Fallujan insurgents used new communications technology to organize and promote themselves, Aidid's son undertook his military training in the US and later led his father's supporters in attacking UN troops. All these points and many more indicate the possibility of blurring the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', of learning and exchange. The media, governments, publics and various international organisations all exist within this world of barriers *and* flows.

### **Circulating Power: Changing Communication Networks Between 1993 & 2004 & Enduring Media Content Themes**

Several aspects of Western media representation of the 'Black Hawk down' events and the 2004 Fallujah contractor killings have been shown to be similar. Was there reason to expect or hope for changes in the presentation of 'others' in the intervening time between Western, particularly American, involvement in Somalia in 1992-1993 and in Iraq ten years later? Findings from this project suggest that while the communications and entertainment economies in which the media, governments, international organisations and audiences operate have changed significantly, much of the style of mainstream media content has remained the same. In terms of structural barriers to journalists covering a broad range of issues in each situation, the embed system created for the Iraq war limited options from the beginning. Those who did not participate in this system received unequal access to Western personnel and plans and had to work in an environment made extremely dangerous by both Iraqi insurgent

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<sup>10</sup> See Gregory's *The Colonial Present* and Lisle & Pepper's "The New Face of Global Hollywood".

forces and American military actions. Those who took part in the embed system, while given much access to US troops, often found it impossible to leave their military units, thus reducing their range of coverage, or found that their reporting came under significant restrictions, especially during action phases for their units.

Journalistic and academic debate about the embedding system has been a significant feature of the 2003 invasion. Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer argue that coverage of the Iraq war, like many wars before it, forced journalists to confront a difficult balancing act between patriotism and militarism. Allan and Zelizer's research suggests that television news remained the most trusted source for the American public during the Iraq war, with twenty-four hour news networks seeing marked increases in their ratings. The unabashed patriotic reporting of Fox News was very popular, suggesting, according to Jim Rutenberg of *The New York Times*, that "there were significant ratings to be gained in 'opinionated news with an America-first flair.'" <sup>11</sup> Although the main terrestrial networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, maintained higher audience numbers overall, the rapid growth of channels such as Fox has worried journalists who still see merit in traditional journalistic values of scepticism towards government, objectivity in reporting and representation of dissenting views. Allan and Zelizer quote CNN's Christiane Amanpour reflecting on these concerns: "I think the press was muzzled and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm sorry to say but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my station [CNN] was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News." When asked whether there were any stories she felt she could not cover, Amanpour answered, "it's not a question of couldn't do it, it's a question of tone." <sup>12</sup> The polarized, and censoring, atmosphere in which Amanpour made these comments becomes clear when Allan and Zelizer report that a Fox News representative later likened Amanpour to a "spokeswoman for al-Qaeda".

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<sup>11</sup> The above information, including the Rutenberg quote, can be found in Stuart Allan & Barbie Zelizer, "Rules of Engagement: Journalism and War", in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allan & Barbie Zelizer, 7 (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Amanpour quoted in Allan & Zelizer, "Rules of Engagement", 8-9.

Across the Atlantic, British concern over the direction American journalism is taking has also been apparent. The BBC's Director General Greg Dyke voiced his concerns regarding the unquestioned support of some American networks for the policies of the Bush administration. Interestingly, Dyke suggested that the reason for this increased 'rallying around the flag' was the decline of the larger, dominant networks of ABC, CBS and NBC; "As a result many of the large television news organisations in the States are no longer profitable or confident of their future. The effect of this fragmentation is to make government, the White House, and the Pentagon, all-powerful with no news organisation strong enough or brave enough to stand up against it."<sup>13</sup> Dyke's concern appears directly opposed to that of many commentators, such as those who follow Chomsky and Herman in viewing increasing consolidation of media-entertainment companies during the post-Somalia 1990s as leading to a decreasing variety of news sources.<sup>14</sup> Many who are worried about consolidation look to the rapidly-expanding Internet to provide new, varied and non-commercial sources of information. Both predictions are worth investigating in greater depth, in terms of better understanding the mechanisms which shape mass media markets and through analysis of the outputs of old and new media types to determine whether diversification or constriction of coverage areas and topics is taking place.

In contrast to the flurry of discussion surrounding Iraq, the media economy in which the Somalia intervention coverage occurred has triggered very little debate. Although the growth of CNN, evident during the 1991 Gulf War, had been significant, it is worth noting that events in Somalia occurred during a period when television networks were facing less competition and before widespread use of the Internet. Although journalists covering the Somalia intervention faced considerable dangers, the structural conditions of Somalia and Iraq were different; this is unsurprising given their historical separation and the very different conceptual positioning of each event. In

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<sup>13</sup> Greg Dyke's speech to the University of London Goldsmiths Journalism Symposium, April 24, 2003, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/speeches/stories/dyke\\_journalism.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/pressoffice/speeches/stories/dyke_journalism.shtml) (accessed July 17, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the work of Daya Kishan Thussu, *International Communication: Continuity & Change* (London: Arnold Publishers, 2000) and Susan Carruthers, *The Media At War: Communication & Conflict in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

Somalia, journalists' movements were also curtailed by violence which came from both the Somali and the American sides. According to journalists who covered the conflict, however, such as Paul Lowe, the media were able to be highly mobile during the early and middle stages of the Somalia intervention. Many had arrived in Somalia prior to the American intervention and therefore, as Lowe explains, the US military did not have the same ability as in Iraq to set the conditions for journalism on the ground.<sup>15</sup> Danger primarily arose after the American hunt for Aidid began, when civilian deaths due to American bombing in Mogadishu turned many Somali civilians against their Western interveners. Jennifer Woofter's work on the subject suggests that, had it not been for this increasing danger, reporting of the intervention would have been viewed by media personnel as relatively straightforward, with good ease of access to most involved parties.<sup>16</sup>

Although different structural factors affected media coverage of both events, this work argues that the content of coverage of the Somalia intervention and Fallujah shares many limitations in the broad discursive strategies used to narrate and image each event. In both cases, there was a strong focus on 'official' Western views of the conflicts, presented through regular media briefings with policymakers and their public relations personnel. Even in more traditionally liberal media, scepticism about statements emanating from government bodies often did not extend to challenging the ways in which issues and events pertaining to each situation were prioritized. Susan Moeller phrases this problem well in relation to the Iraq war:

In effect the media continued to confirm the Bush administration's political and diplomatic agenda-setting. Through overly stenographic reporting on the president, the media amplified the administration's voice- so when Bush said to the country that Americans were vulnerable to WMD in the hands of terrorists, the media effectively

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<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with Paul Lowe, November 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Kay Woofter, "OPSEC v. RTK: Media Restrictions in United Nations Peacekeeping", [scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-11272000-114350/](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-11272000-114350/), 81-85 (accessed July 17, 2007).



magnified those fears, even while they challenged the prior assumption that Iraq had been an 'imminent threat'.<sup>17</sup>

Returning to the theoretical work of Chapter One, combined with the empirical findings of Chapters Four, Five and Six, it is possible to link understandings of Somalia and Fallujah, and of Somalis and Fallujans, to older, powerful discourses of colonialism, and beyond this point to ethical considerations of the politics of identity creation. Both Somalia and Iraq, and their peoples, have consistently been classed as 'different' from the 'Western world', which has positioned itself as an entity with the right, or even the duty, to define and intervene in 'them', both discursively and materially. Resistance to such classifications and actions is sometimes recognized, and often crushed, but rarely, as Baudrillard suggests, is an 'exchange' between an 'us' and 'them' allowed or acknowledged to occur. In Spivak's language, indebted to that of Levinas and Derrida, the 'other' or 'subaltern' is often not allowed to speak. Western mainstream media coverage tends to be about 'us': 'our' troops, 'our' leaders, 'our' civilians, 'our' story; the often-enforced silence of 'others', however, can and should be made visible and relevant. This silencing also has important ethical ramifications for 'our' frequent failure to acknowledge injury to 'others' or even to recognize the existence and rights of 'others'. It results in a 'West' which looks at the world through a one-way mirror<sup>18</sup>, and is constantly surprised when the 'other' speaks or acts 'back' in unpredicted ways, proving that it too can be a 'self', capable of watching 'the West'.

A diverse range of commentators, from Gregory to Baudrillard to anti-colonial writers such as Frantz Fanon, point out that the damage of this hegemon/subordinate relationship does not merely run in one direction. In a world where the chasms and divisions between 'friends' and 'enemies' can produce significant discursive and material effects, and where such divisions can change, shift and have similar affects at more local levels; we are all always at risk of becoming 'others'.<sup>19</sup> Gregory quotes

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<sup>17</sup> Moeller, "A Moral Imagination: The Media's Response To The War On Terrorism", 71.

<sup>18</sup> Metaphor taken from Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> As an example, David Campbell's work, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) details the discursive and material histories and

Samuel Huntington at the beginning of *The Clash of Civilizations* in order to highlight Huntington's basis of identity politics: "There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are."<sup>20</sup> This statement bases relationships with 'others' in a fundamentally negative way and, as Gregory points out, is presented as a 'truth', rather than as a constructed state of affairs. It denies the hope of 'our' being able to hear, see and exchange with 'others' in 'their' terms, or in shared terms, a possibility which is at the heart of Derrida and Levinas' deconstructive ethics and which, as a strategy of approach, could allow particular power/knowledge accumulations, in Foucault's theoretical terms, to be challenged from within.

With specific reference to media coverage, there is little question that stories which encourage the possibility of exchange would necessarily also involve a rethinking of the imagery and narrative styles used in much current Western mainstream coverage. As but one brief example, this might involve a decreased use of 'voiceover', the presentation of images by a usually 'outside' narrator, and an increased effort to listen to, and to actually include, the voices of 'others' in media reports. In a world where segments of the mass media accept uncritically the statements of government leaders and policymakers, it will be necessary to seek out a variety of critical news sources. Although some commentators have expressed hope and faith that many of these new sources will be Internet-based, other scholars and media personnel, such as Piers Robinson and Greg Dyke, have argued that a proliferation of new Internet media will not necessarily equal a greater diversity of viewpoints or more critical ones.<sup>21</sup>

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effects of inside/outside binaries, illustrating how international exclusionary actions built around 'America' vs. 'other' concepts often also create domestic 'others' in 'America' who must be contained and policed. Gregory makes this point in *The Colonial Present* with reference to the US Patriot Act and other domestic security measures on American soil, which have placed certain groups, affiliated with external 'others', under increased scrutiny. Examples would include segments of the American Muslim population.

<sup>20</sup> This is Gregory quoting Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations*, where Huntington is quoting from novelist Michael Dibdin's work, *Dead Lagoon*. Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, 260.

<sup>21</sup> See Piers Robinson, "Researching US Media-State Relations and Twenty-First Century Wars", in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allan & Barbie Zelizer, 100-102 (London: Routledge, 2004).

To return to the question asked at the beginning of this section, the shift in circulations of power and media economies from Somalia to Fallujah is perhaps describable as an intensification in many directions, rather than a 'change'. New communications technologies are being embraced by the media, governments, international organisations and public audiences. In the sphere of media-military interactions, military groups have embraced various communications strategies in an attempt to better assert their own agendas in a world of expanding media reach and diversifying media formats. In turn, various media organisations, and private individuals, have responded by using new technological forums for spreading their own ideas, for example, in the case of the current Iraq conflict, Internet blogging. Further study to better understand the dynamics of these interactions will be important. I feel, particularly, that academic study of and engagement with audiences will be crucial for interpreting how different groups are selecting media sources, interpreting media narratives and images, and, in some cases, creating their own media sites of news and information.

### **Contributions to Knowledge & Recommendations for Further Research**

This project has been based upon the assumption that mass media images and narratives have an important role to play in the workings of international and domestic politics. It suggests that technological developments, particularly in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have enabled a rapidly-growing 'economy' of images and means of communicating information; these new commodities are circulated in an international sphere defined by shifting and unequal power relations. Images should thus be understood through their various functions as creations, exchange objects and interpretative objects within human social systems, rather than as artifacts somehow

separate from these systems.<sup>22</sup> This particular worldview owes much to the theoretical work of Foucault, whose contributions to understanding the history of knowledge creation and use by social institutions has been critical for re-thinking colonial and postcolonial practices of identity creation in particular. The role of images in this history has been well-documented<sup>23</sup>, but this project brings these analytical efforts into modern, and very recent, times, when image-creation has been rendered faster, easier and more accessible to many groups.

The study of modern media and visual economies at their intersections with geopolitics requires, as political geographer David Campbell suggests, a significant amount of further development.<sup>24</sup> The importance of theorizing “what images do in circulation rather than just an interpretation of their iconography”<sup>25</sup> is acknowledged by this project, both in what is drawn out of its theoretical influences but also in its empirical analysis of the Somalia and Fallujah case studies. The influence and ‘power’ of images and narratives, at various points and for various actors in each event, has been regularly assumed. In making these assumptions throughout this work, I have become strongly aware of the need for further theoretical and empirical study to explore *how* news images and narratives in particular might produce or encourage certain actions, emotions and ways of understanding. I feel that this effort will continue to require a strong focus on the study of discourses and texts that accompany images, supporting the ideas of those such as Susan Sontag and Gillian Rose that visual media is always mixed media. Social and historical ‘settings’, along with actual surrounding information, are therefore crucial parts of image analysis. Understanding the active, performative aspects of visual media will need to involve engagement with audiences, media personnel, policymakers and representatives of the NGO and international organization sectors, as was suggested at the end of the previous section.

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the idea of ‘visual economy’, see Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the work of James Ryan, Victor Burgin, and John Tagg.

<sup>24</sup> I am drawing heavily here on material from David Campbell’s work, “Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict”, *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 360-361.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, “Geopolitics and Visuality”, 361.

While these groups should not be interpreted too rigidly, as single individuals might fit into more than one, nonetheless such work will likely yield important new insights. Much of media and communications research to date has focused specifically on levels of influence and interaction between media personnel and governmental policymakers and this focus should be extended to explore the creative, circulatory and interpretive work of other groups.

The contributions of this project become clearer when focus is put on its empirical contributions. The case study of the Somalia intervention provides a more in-depth analysis of this event's Western media coverage than has been undertaken in previous academic research, such as that done by Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, Jonathan Mermin and Piers Robinson. Specifically, it asks questions about the content of media coverage and what affects this content may have, rather than focusing primarily on coverage volume as predictive of specific actions. Although academic research on the content and style of Fallujah, and generally Iraq's, media coverage has been conducted by other authors, such as Stephen Graham and Derek Gregory, this project's focus particularly on newspaper and selected television coverage had not yet been undertaken. With the example of Daniel Hallin's analysis of Vietnam War coverage in mind, this work's aim was to study media coverage of a particular event in depth and over a significant duration of time. Because of the expense of acquiring a large volume of television coverage, sustained studies of visual media are often difficult to undertake. The work of Hallin in America and that of the Glasgow Media Group in Britain<sup>26</sup> stand out as examples of efforts to analyse television coverage with greater rigour than this work was able to achieve, largely for financial reasons. Nonetheless, it has been able to contribute a level of depth, particularly in analysis of Somalia intervention newspaper coverage, which is valuable for recognizing both the strength and fragility of various styles of imagery and narratives over time.

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<sup>26</sup> See, as examples, John Eldridge ed., *Getting the Message: News, Truth & Power* (London: Routledge, 1993) and John Eldridge ed., *Glasgow Media Group Reader Volume 1* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Theoretically and methodologically, I am uncomfortable with research which attempts to make broad claims or generalisations across social phenomena and throughout history. Following in a strong, multidisciplinary tradition of detailed case study work, but particularly influenced by the work of Foucault in that regard, the aim of this work has been to undertake a close analysis of a particular event, the Somalia intervention. A less detailed case study, Fallujah, has been used for comparison and to provide current relevance to this event of over fourteen years ago. It is my hope that sustained case study research of other portions of the 2003 Iraq war's media coverage, among many other important world events, will be undertaken in the future. Study of past events with apparent lasting relevance to political discourses surrounding international intervention, such as the Rwandan genocide, the Bosnian conflict and the Kosovo crisis would also be a useful extension of the research that has been undertaken here. Although the technological capabilities available to various groups and political context are different in each case, the content of coverage for each may well illustrate similarities across time and space.

The primary aim of this project was to highlight and problematize the powerful dichotomizations made between a primarily Western 'us' and 'others', which are evident across a wide range of media coverage, in order to hint at the failings and consequences of such attempts at division. This aspect of the research undertaken by this project owes much to the theoretical approach of Derrida and Levinas, touching upon ethical issues for visual studies of the geopolitical, the importance of which Campbell, for one, stresses. To paraphrase Campbell, the ways in which images establish either distancing or proximate relations with 'others', and how they help to create and define 'others', will likely continue to be a major issue for studies of media and geopolitics.<sup>27</sup> My future research efforts will involve a continuing investigation of the ways in which visual and discursive economies encourage and enable particular flows of knowledge and understanding while obfuscating and denying others. Tracing the appearances, disappearances and fetishizing of particular images and discourses

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<sup>27</sup> Campbell, "Geopolitics and Visuality", 361.

could provide ways of tracking and exposing the workings of power/knowledge in global societies. It could also assist in the development of ethical strategies and projects which aim to challenge and contest violence and oppression in their many forms.

Susan Carruthers states these aims particularly clearly with relation to areas of 'Africa':

"more must be done to place 'the West' and 'Africa' in the same analytic frame...Exploring this obfuscated mutuality may help us better understand both the character of the West- particularly its self-proclaimed 'humanitarian interventions'- and the global underpinnings of ruptured social relations in Africa."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Susan Carruthers, "Tribalism and Tribulation: Media Constructions of 'African Savagery' and 'Western Humanitarianism' in the 1990s", in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer, 157 (London: Routledge, 2004).

## Appendix One – List of Media Items Surveyed

### *Somalia Coverage*

#### Newspapers

*The New York Times*

1992 – 275 articles

1993 – 354 articles

*The Times*

1992 – 201 articles

1993 – 214 articles

#### Television

ABC coverage (nightly primetime news items unless noted as *Nightline*)

November 30, 1992 *Nightline* (carries over to December 1)

December 4, 1992 (Bush's speech on sending troops with Special Report by Peter Jennings)

December 7, 1992

December 8, 1992 *Nightline* in Somalia

December 11, 1992 *Nightline* Road to Baidoa

January 27, 1993 *Nightline* Homecoming – An End in Sight?

June 12, 1993

June 14, 1993

June 17, 1993

June 21, 1993

October 4, 1993

October 5, 1993 *Nightline*

October 7, 1993

October 8, 1993

October 10, 1993

October 14, 1993

October 25, 1993

BBC coverage (nightly 9 o'clock news)

December 4, 1992

December 6, 1992



December 7, 1992  
December 8, 1992  
December 9, 1992  
December 11, 1992  
June 6, 1993  
June 7, 1993  
June 8, 1993  
June 11, 1993  
June 12, 1993  
June 13, 1993  
August 30, 1993  
September 6, 1993  
October 5, 1993  
October 6, 1993  
October 7, 1993  
October 10, 1993  
October 14, 1993  
October 25, 1993

### *Fallujah Coverage*

#### Newspapers

US newspapers

March 2004 – 17 articles  
April 2004 – 37 articles  
May 2004 – 13 articles  
October 15 – November 15, 2004 – 20 articles

UK newspapers

March 2004 – 4 articles  
April 2004 – 92 articles  
May 2004 – 32 articles  
October 15 – November, 2004 – 27 articles

## Television

CNN coverage (from nightly newscasts unless indicated as special programming)

March 31, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, Habbaniyah
April 1, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah, Baghdad
April 1, 2004	Images of War/History/Turnley & Burns interview – CNN <i>Newsnight</i>
April 2, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah
April 2, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah/82 <sup>nd</sup> Airborne
April 6, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Ramadi/Nordland Interview
April 14, 2004	Iraq/Uprising/Hostages/Fallujah/Troops...
April 19, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/An Insider's View/Aerial Vehicles
April 21, 2004	Iraq/Insurgency/Fallujah/Cost of War
April 23, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah
April 25, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf
April 26, 2004	Iraq/Drafting History/Journalists/A Discussion
April 28, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf/Shadid Interview
April 30, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/Najaf/'Nightline' Story
June 26, 2004	Iraq/Reporter's Notebook/Ware Interview
June 30, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/Rosen Interview
July 5, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Air Strike/Hassoun Kidnap
July 8, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Fallujah
September 17, 2004	Iraq/Attacks/Baghdad/Fallujah
October 1, 2004	Iraq/Samarra Offensive/Fallujah
October 11, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah/Air Strike/Cockpit Video
October 31, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah
November 5, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Allam Interview
November 6, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Murray Interview
November 8, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Offensive/Anderson Interview
November 10, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Assault/Anderson Interview
November 10, 2004	Segment 7 (Staying Alive)
November 11, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah Assault
November 16, 2004	Iraq/Hassan Execution/Fallujah/Shooting
November 18, 2004	Iraq/Fallujah
November 26, 2004	Iraq/Elections/Mosul/Fallujah

## Appendix Two – References for Somalia & Fallujah Images from Internet Sources

### Somalia

**Image 9** – ‘Famine’ mother and child in Somalia, photographer – Scott Peterson, source – Edina Education Image Gallery, <http://edina.ac.uk/eig/>

**Image 10** – Body and clothing in Somalia, photographer – Scott Peterson, source – Edina Education Image Gallery, <http://edina.ac.uk/eig/>

**Image 15(i)** – Demonstrators in Mogadishu, photographer – Scott Peterson, source – Edina Education Image Gallery, <http://edina.ac.uk/eig/>

### Fallujah

**Figure 6** – *The New York Times*, April 1, 2004

**Figure 7** – *The New York Post*, April 1, 2004

**Figure 8** – *The Guardian*, April 1, 2004

**Figure 9** – *The New York Sun*, April 1, 2004

**Figure 10** – *The Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2004

All of the above newspaper front pages were sourced from the Newseum website archive,

[http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default\\_archive.asp?fpArchive=040104](http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default_archive.asp?fpArchive=040104)  
(accessed July 9, 2007).

**Image 20** – Fallujah bombed from the air, Global Security.org, Public Eye, Source – Digital Globe, [www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/fallujah-imagery.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/fallujah-imagery.htm)  
(accessed July 9, 2007).

**Image 21** – Boy crying near rubble, an AFP image, used on *The Age* website, [www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/09/09/1094530764694.html](http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/09/09/1094530764694.html) (accessed July 9, 2007).

**Image 22** – US Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division prepare to enter and clear a building during fighting in Fallujah, Iraq. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Johancharles Van Boers, dated November 12, 2004, <http://www4.army.mil/armyimages/armyimage.php?photo=3952> (accessed July 8, 2007).

**Image 23** – An M-109A6 howitzer from Alpha Battery, 3rd Battalion, 83rd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, sends a round down range during combat operations in Fallujah, Iraq. US Army photo by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Johancharles Van Boers, dated November 6, 2004, <http://www4.army.mil/armyimages/armyimage.php?photo=3922> (accessed July 8, 2007).

**Image 24** – A dead US soldier in Fallujah. Pictured in the German magazine, *Stern* 49, November 25, 2004, [www.karlofgermany.com/sample2.htm](http://www.karlofgermany.com/sample2.htm) (accessed July 9, 2007).

**Image 25** – Doctors in Fallujah General Hospital are tied up by US troops, November 8, 2004. This photo was said to have appeared in *The New York Times*, <http://www.internationalist.org/fallujarape0412.html> (accessed July 9, 2007).

**Image 26** – Dead child in Fallujah, shown on al-Jazeera, November 15, 2004, [www.bu.edu/globalbeat/index111504.html](http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/index111504.html) (accessed July 8, 2007).

**Image 27** – Image captioned “Fallujah fighters awaiting looming US-Iraqi offensive” dated July 10, 2004, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=11503> (accessed October 4, 2007).

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